
S E R M O N S

BY

J. N. PUDDICOMBE, M.A.

S E R M O N S

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J. M. RUDOLPH, M.A.

S E R M O N S

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J. N. PUDDICOMBE, M. A.

FELLOW OF DULWICH-COLLEGE;

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S E R M O N S

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Richard By

Richard Nettleship

June 14 1840

E R R A T U M.

Sermon 4, page 82, line 4, for *despondency* read *despair*.

S E R M O N I.

ST. LUKE xix. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

SUCH was the pathetic lamentation of our Saviour over Jerusalem, a city which, notwithstanding the continual proofs he gave in it of his divine mission, and the forcible exhortations which he made use of to reclaim it, still persisted in the most unaccountable incredulity and obdurate impenitence. The bigoted and prejudiced Jews, instead of being converted,

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and

2 S E R M O N I.

and struck with reverential astonishment at the mighty miracles which they saw him perform, ascribed them to the prince of darkness, crying out, with an absurdity which could only be equalled by their impiety, *This man casteth out devils by the prince of the devils*; and though they confessed that *never man spake like this man*, they received his instructions at one time with the most bitter taunts and revilings, at another overlooked them with the most contemptuous neglect! This ungrateful behaviour, in conjunction with the thought of that lamentable destruction which was suspended over the devoted town, melted that eye of genuine pity into tears, and drew from that heavenly tongue the gentle and moving complaint which gave birth to these meditations.

Do not our bosoms glow with indignation at this injurious treatment of so exalted a personage as the Son of God? How bitter a return for his benevolent efforts to open their benighted eyes, and conduct
them

S E R M O N I. 3

them into the paths of immortal felicity ! But while we burn with pious anger at the presumptuous pertinacity of the incredulous Jews, let us inspect our own conduct, and impartially consider, whether we have continually paid him that degree of attention and reverence which they refused, and to which his divine admonitions and exemplary character indisputably entitled him ? Alas ! too many there are, who, though they have never had the opportunity of treating their Saviour's person with insult and contempt like the Jewish nation, have yet rendered themselves equally culpable with that blind and hardened race, by spurning the sacred dictates of his love with an aversion not inferior to theirs. Of multitudes might he say, were he now on earth, what he once said of Jerusalem, *How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not !* Yes ! how many, and what melting instances of clemency, from day to day, has he lavished upon them ! With what amazing patience

4 S E R M O N I.

and long-suffering love has he awaited the return of his self-estranged and rebellious children ! Can they reflect on this without feeling some emotions of contrition for their ingratitude, without trembling at the lamentable consequences which must attend so obstinate a rejection of his bounty ! But, perhaps, their favourable situation in life precludes all thoughts of this nature. Placed in an elevated sphere, and favoured by fortune with every thing to which their most sanguine wishes can aspire, they abandon themselves to a rash security, and fondly imagine that their happiness is established on an immoveable basis. Such, if we may judge by their conduct, are the thoughts of many in the world. Because they have never hitherto seen any sorrow, they seem to conclude that they never shall see any ; all tranquil, careless, and supine, they take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, saying with impious presumption, if not openly, yet in their hearts, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ?* Yet how soon may that

S E R M O N I. 5

that golden mountain, which appears so strong and durable, be shaken and overthrown ! On how poor, how frail a support does human happiness hang !

* The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable, to man's tender tie
On earthly bliss ; it breaks at every breeze.

Infatuated men ! Did they but listen to the sober suggestions of reason, and examine on how deceitful a foundation their confidence rests, what would be their consternation and surprize ! They would discover that they have been blindly dancing on the brink of a precipice, where another step would have hurried them over the verge into inevitable destruction. With what horror would they start at the serpents which lurk, meditating death, beneath that verdure and those flowers which appear so pleasing to the eye, and on which they inconsiderately repose, intent on no-

* Dr. Young.

B 3

thing

6 S E R M O N I.

thing but new expedients to amuse the tedious moments, and enliven the languor of satiety! Let them open their eyes, and perceive the alarming dangers which beset them ere it be too late,—ere death himself interrupt the progress of their pleasures. He is ever stealing onwards with unperceived and silent step, and may suddenly tear them from their beloved pursuits for ever! Alas! how unprepared for the reception of this unceremonious and terrible intruder! How little did the Chaldean monarch think, amidst the jollity, sumptuous profusion of luxuries, and regal magnificence with which he was surrounded, that his end was so near! when lo (uncommon and alarming sight!) the hand of an invisible agent came forth, and wrote upon the wall of his palace, wrote in the view of the shuddering king and all his astonished guests, “Thy kingdom is finished.” Nor was it long before this prediction was verified; for in that night he was deprived both of his kingdom and his life.

Daily

S E R M O N I. 7

Daily instances demonstrate the shortness and instability of human life. Every moment hastens us towards our end, and very small is the distance from the cradle to the tomb. Yet on this scanty interval how much is depending ! no less than our eternal destination ! With our actions in the present life, our future happiness or misery is inseparably connected. Anticipate then, unthinking mortal, that decisive period which will of itself soon arrive ! alas ! too soon for numbers ! Reflect on the multitudes of the young and gay who are daily falling around thee, and, perhaps, had promised themselves, like thee, a long series of happy years to come. How has death blasted all their smiling prospects, and with one blow leveled to the dust that visionary fabric which they had reared so high, and whose basis seemed so solid and steadfast ! He spares none ; the bloom of youth and the hoary head of age are alike obnoxious to his ravages : all ages and all stations fall before him unrevered, unpitied, and undistinguished. Not virtue, nor piety itself, can

8 S E R M O N I.

ward off the blow, or protract for one moment the last solemn hour. Why then attach ourselves so closely to this world, and discover such solicitude about objects which we are not certain of retaining a moment longer! Why suffer our minds to be discomposed and agitated by every slight incident which comes across our way, by trifles which it is beneath the dignity of the rational nature to regard! All that we can enjoy or suffer here is but the phantom of an hour, the shadow of a shade, and is utterly unworthy to be compared with those immortal glories which shall be revealed in full and transporting vision hereafter. When the sun shall be plucked from the firmament of heaven, when earth shall crumble into ruins, and Time shall be no more, a length of duration shall succeed, compared to which all that series of years which the great luminaries of the sky have already measured, added to what they may in future measure till the final consummation, is no more than an indivisible point of time.

Eternity

S E R M O N I. 9

Eternity is even to the best an awful and alarming thought! much more then to those who have never had a view towards it in any of their actions. However the sons of thoughtless festivity may treat it with ill-timed derision, and study to exclude it from their minds, yet let them be assured the season will arrive when it shall recoil with full force upon them, and by the intimidating prospect which it presents before them take ample vengeance on that levity and presumption which so madly before refused it admittance. Often did it solicit an entrance at their hearts, and as often was it repulsed. Unkind return for its endeavours to reclaim, and to impress them with a proper sense of their interesting situation !

Surely, were this solemn thought entertained with that fervour and attention which it demands, we should not see mankind so intent on the pursuit of sublunary things, so tenacious of those dignities and honours which they must, they know not how soon, resign, and so impatient of every
trivial

10 S E R M O N I.

trivial occurrence which may chance to thwart their designs! Like the potent rod of Moses swallowing up the rods of the Egyptian magicians, it would entirely absorb and bury every human care; it would transform every faculty of the soul, mould it into a disposition to relish nothing but immortal joys, and be an insuperable obstacle to the entrance of every imagination but what belongs to heaven. All, which now appears of such moment, would dwindle into nothing, and be rejected as contemptible. Were it universally and properly indulged, a total change would take place in the face of nature. That golden age which the poets feigned to have been once upon the earth, would then be realized indeed, and genuine happiness dwell with mortals. Justice, who was fabled to have taken her flight from earth long ago, would return from heaven, and again bless mankind with her presence. The voice of contention would be no longer heard; the rage of the destroyed would cease. Nation would not lift the sword against nation, nor kingdom
rise

S E R M O N I. 11

rise up against kingdom, neither should they learn war any more; but man would delight in doing good to man, and order, peace, and harmony, extend their auspicious influence over the world: their diffusive blessings, like the sun, would impart happiness to all. To use the beautiful figurative language of scripture, the solitary place would rejoice, and the wilderness flourish and blossom as the rose. We should see that new earth of which the apostle speaks, wherein righteousness dwells, and Paradise would be again restored. Earth would become a picture of those regions which the wicked can never trouble, and where the weary are at rest; where the tears are wiped away from every eye for ever, and sorrow and sighing are no more!

Such are the happy effects which would ensue from allowing that exalted idea, Eternity, an uncontrouled dominion over the heart. It would produce that happy change in the affections which the apostle means in this advice. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed in the renewing
of

12 S E R M O N I.

of your minds.—Cherish it then with the utmost assiduity—the most zealous care. Make it the grand scope to which all thy actions tend, and let it be always present to thy thoughts. However deeply thy soul may be immersed among terrestrial concerns, however chained down to the pleasures of sense ; yet on a due contemplation of this great object, all disentangled and refined, it shall recover its native dignity, soar above this world, and attach itself to God alone ; it shall be enabled to eradicate and expel every depraved habit, though by degrees, yet effectually, like the chosen race, who by little and little extirpated the Canaanites from the promised land. Dost thou pride thyself in thy opulence, dignity, and honours ? Viewing them in contrast with never-fading crowns and immortal glories, their insufficiency and worthlessness will appear in the strongest light, and thou wilt immediately withdraw thy hopes from so feeble a prop. Thou shalt find within thyself that renovation of spirit and of heart which the Gospel

S E R M O N I. 13

Gospel enjoins as necessary to recommend us to the favour of heaven, and which inevitably results from the strict observance of its rules.

Since an eternity of bliss or misery succeeds our present short stay on earth, how incumbent is it upon us to make the most of it, and do all the good we can while we continue below ! Thou child of wealth and fortune, whoever thou art, sedulously improve the talent committed to thy care, not burying it in the earth like the unprofitable servant, but by proper management multiplying it, and making it instrumental to the benefit of thy fellow-creatures ; that when thy Lord returns to demand an account of thy disposal of it, thy fidelity may be crowned with its due applause, and thou be commanded to enter into those never-ending joys which he has appropriated for the reward of a faithful attention to his precepts.

I have lost a day, said a Roman emperor, when, taking a review of his actions
in

14 S E R M O N I.

in the evening, he could not recollect any good that he had performed during the day; accounting every day lost that was not marked with some exertion of beneficence towards mankind. Surely this was magnanimity and philanthropy well worthy of the imitation of every Christian. If an Heathen, who had nothing for his guide but unenlightened reason, could attain to so exalted a pitch of benevolence and goodness, what ought our improvement to be, supremely blest as we are with the advantages of revelation, and consequently with incitements and directions to be good, of which he was ignorant! Under the most rational and sublime dispensation of religion, where every article of our duty is held forth to our view in characters which he who runs may read, inexcusable would it be to disregard its instructions, and ignominious to suffer ourselves to be excelled by one who walked by the dim glimmering light of nature. 'Twas unassisted nature alone that whispered to his heart, Do good to all men; but Revelation's louder voice
has

S E R M O N I. 15

has commanded us, to unite the love of human kind with the love of God; for this is the best and most steadfast principle of our doing to others as we would that they should do to us.—Hast thou then deprived thy neighbour of his possessions, or (what is by far the greater injury of the two) hast thou by unjust aspersions stained his spotless fame, and robbed him of his peace of mind? Think on the repugnancy of such a step to thy Redeemer's injunctions, atone in some measure for the wrong which thou hast done him by the sincerity of thy sorrow, and use thy utmost efforts to make immediate compensation for such atrocious misconduct. Hast thou turned away thy face from the poor man? Have distress and misery implored thy assistance in vain? Hasten to their relief without delay, and, like the good Samaritan, pour the balm of comfort into their wounds. Too long hast thou listened to the treacherous insinuations of fashion and folly, bowed with obsequious zeal at their shrine, and offered incense
there

there which should have been appropriated to a holier altar ; too long hast thou idolized their fascinating charms, and refrained from being good, in imitation of an evil world. Let it mislead thee no more, trample on the fatal spell by which it blinds the reason of its votaries, and turn with disdain from its caresses. No longer be so easy, so credulous a prey to its artifices ; ruin is concealed beneath its seducing blandishments. Persevere no longer in the path diametrically opposite to that which thy true interest points out. Look upon the blessings which Providence has lavished around thee, and let them not be showered upon thy head in vain. Instead of squandering the wealth which it gave for far nobler purposes, in the idle pursuit of unreal pleasures, dedicate a portion at least of thy abundance to the supply of want, and the alleviation of wretchedness. Think how unworthy thou art of that beneficence with which thy Creator has distinguished thee, and let the exuberance of his lenity and love give birth to pious gratitude

S E R M O N I. 17

tude, and melt thy heart to penitential sorrow. Consider this emphatic and necessary exhortation of the apostle as addressed to thyself, *Despiseſt thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* Know that his bounty is a demand on thy obedience, and where much is given, much is also required.

If this be the case, if according to the multiplicity of favours shown, our attachment to our benefactor ought to increase (a truth which has ever been indisputable), how great an obligation does the British nation in particular lie under to lift up its grateful heart continually to heaven, and to devote itself entirely to the greatest of Beings, who takes delight, from time to time, to shower down his mercies upon it with unsparing hand! Perhaps no nation, except that of Israel, was ever distinguished in so peculiar a manner by the protection and beneficence of heaven. While other kingdoms groan under a variety of disasters

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and

18 S E R M O N I.

and calamities, some falling a prey to Famine, or to that tremendous destroyer the Pestilence, some overturned by that more tremendous scourge of humankind, the Earthquake, or depopulated by wars and other direful causes, the voice of joy and gladness resounds throughout our dwellings, and all is security, peace, and felicity! The Psalmist's elegant description of the safe and happy state of him who is blessed with the divine favour, we may justly apply to ourselves: *Thou shalt not be afraid* (says he), *for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flyeth by day; for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. There shall no evil happen unto thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling: for he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* All this is at the present moment true of us; and that it has been generally so, the recording page of history will amply demonstrate to any one
whom

whom curiosity may incite to turn it over. The numerous and signal deliverances of this land from impending destruction, from the violence of open, and the treachery of concealed enemies, which are there transmitted down to posterity, are sufficient to excite our deepest wonder, and to kindle our most ardent gratitude. And to such a degree have other countries been struck with this protecting care and conspicuous vigilance of heaven in our behalf, that, impelled by astonishment, they have called this the island of God!

In order to impress our minds with a deeper sense of our own happy situation, let us turn our eyes to those kingdoms which have experienced disasters, and been overwhelmed by miseries, from which we have been utterly exempted. Think, ye obdurate and gay, oh! think in particular on Lisbon. When were we visited by the immense afflictions which, not many years since, befell that unhappy city? Alas! what a destiny!—Torn up from the very foundations!

20 S E R M O N I.

dations! its lofty edifices leveled with the dust, and thousands of its wretched inhabitants buried beneath its ruins! How suddenly did destruction, like an inundation, overspread this once-joyous metropolis! May that Almighty Being, who has hitherto preserved this land, still continue his kindness towards it, and avert from our heads such vast distresses! The catastrophe of horror which Lisbon and its environs exhibited, is renewed and strikes us again in the recent calamities of Sicily. The lamentable fate of Calabria and its adjacent regions, to a great extent, must be still fresh in the memories of all. What feeling heart but must drop a tear over the desolation of that unfortunate country! So lately flourishing and fair, now behold her convulsed and torn to pieces! Her stately buildings and those of humbler appearance, palaces, cottages, and temples, the festive abodes of pleasure and the mansions of sorrow, all blended together and confounded in one common ruin! A frightful scene of devastation and despair! The voice of music, felicity, and mirth, is
heard

S E R M O N I. 21

heard in her no more; their chearful sounds are exchanged for those of lamentation, mourning, and woe! How is her opulence suddenly come to nought! how is she in one moment made desolate! Applicable indeed to her is the weeping Prophet's description of the miserable state of Jerusalem when sacked and burnt by the Babylonian Monarch: How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: she hath none to comfort her. The ways of Zion mourn, her beauty is departed, and she is in bitterness.

When therefore we compare our situation with that of neighbouring realms, can we fail to offer up unanimously the sacrifice of praise and adoration to that Power, who, in the hour of danger, hides us under the shadow of his wings, who wards off from our land the hurricane, the pestilence, and the earthquake, those dreadful instruments of ruin, which spread their ravages over so

22 S E R M O N I.

great a part of the globe, saying to them as to the nations of old in behalf of his favoured Israel, Touch not mine anointed, and do my people no harm? Can we be unmoved and insensible, at such repeated and signal proofs of his love! Shall we presume to repay it with a behaviour similar to that which made the Saviour weep over Jerusalem—with an indifference and perverseness which would again extort from his eye the sympathetic tear, were he among us in human form as once in Judea! Forbid it, justice, devotion, and gratitude!

No: let us make a proper use of these awful warnings of heaven. Let them leave that deep impression on the heart which they cannot fail to leave, if considered with due attention. Stimulating us to bless the goodness of Providence for our continual exemption from similar calamities, they should rouse us from all indolence with regard to our eternal concerns, and make us for ever on the watch, that we may be prepared for whatever changes and revolutions

S E R M O N I. 23

may happen. How strongly do they inculcate the necessity of walking with the utmost care and circumspection in a state so liable to vicissitudes and misfortunes, and of earnestly endeavouring to insure the favour of that Being, with whom alone dwells safety and immutability; that although on earth we have no continuing city, we may, with confidence, look upwards to that heavenly one, whose foundations are immovable——whose builder and maker is God!

And thou, O Son of God, deign the efficacious concurrence of thy grace with our sincere though feeble efforts to resemble thee in every circumstance of conduct. How amiable an example of tender sympathy hast thou given us in thy concern for that obstinate and devoted city, Jerusalem! How admirably didst thou enforce thy precepts by thy own practice! *Bless them that curse you, pray for those that despitefully use you.* Didst thou weep for thy inveterate and implacable adversaries, when thou

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couldst

couldst not but know that in requital of thy goodness they would unite at a future period with all the virulence of barbarous and insatiable rancour in one general cry, *Crucify him, crucify him?* Didst thou, the Lord and sovereign of the universe, do this for thy vassal creatures, and shall not we have compassion upon our fellow creatures? Yes surely, if we hope that thou wilt have pity on us. Oh, eradicate what is selfish in our natures, and soften what is obdurate! inform our bosoms with an emanation of that never-failing benevolence which was extended equally to all, and diffused blessings with impartial distribution to foe as well as friend. Teach us not only to rejoice with them that rejoice, but to weep with them that weep, and at least to sympathize with the wretched if it is not in our power to relieve them. Fain would we, O divine Philanthropist, catch a spark of that celestial flame which glowed with such beneficial ardor in thy breast, while on earth. Enable us in some measure

sure

S E R M O N I. 25

ture to emulate that pattern of sublime perfection which thou hast left us, and give us to know the things which belong to our peace before they are hid from our eyes for ever.

Heb. Sept 21. 1840

SERMON

22 J. W. O. M. S. 2

the to emulate that pattern of the human
form which they had lost, and
give us to know the things which belong
to our peace and life, and that from the
eyes for ever.

MEMORIAL

S E R M O N II.

On the Omnipresence of God.

PSALM CXXXIX. 9, 10.

*If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell
in the uttermost parts of the sea :*

*Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy
right hand shall hold me.*

THE royal writer in this Psalm expatiates in the most sublime and beautiful manner on one of the incommunicable attributes of God, his Omnipresence. Absorbed in reverential astonishment, he contemplates him as about his bed, and about his path, and spying out all his ways; as the inspector of his most inmost thoughts, and even acquainted with them long before they were formed. Full of this august and solemn

28 S E R M O N II.

solemn idea, he breaks forth into this exalted and more than mortal strain, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.* And surely at beholding the Supreme Being in this majestic light, the most insensible and obdurate heart must feel itself impressed with the deepest sentiments of awe, humility, and amazement.

This grand survey cannot too frequently engross the attention of mankind; it being admirably calculated for suppressing every idle and licentious thought which may intrude upon the mind, and consequently for preventing the commission of any act incompatible with their duty, subversive of their internal peace in this world, and their felicity in the other. For how can they
 who

S E R M O N II. 29

who properly consider that they are every where surrounded with the Deity, that he pervades, and fills, and animates every part of the universe, an unerring and unfailing witness of all they imagine, say and do; how can they, who deliberately ponder this, adopt a conduct of which he disapproves, and which will infallibly render them objects of his vengeance! Entertaining a full conviction that they are under the scrutiny of an all-seeing eye, which pierces through the deepest gloom of midnight, and distinctly views the most sequestered scene of privacy and retirement, are they capable of doing any thing which can offend it—that eye which is too pure to behold iniquity! Can they even indulge a thought displeasing to the unblemished holiness of Him, to whom the inmost recesses of the heart lie open!

The whole intellectual world cannot furnish us with an idea more striking and awful than that of an omnipresent God.

Let

39 S E R M O N II.

Let the sons of gaiety and dissipation suffer it to operate for a moment on their minds with its compleat energy ; let them be induced to it by the reflection, that it administers a sovereign antidote for those disorders which assault the soul, and deface its original beauty. Under the influence of this elevating thought, quickly will it occur to them, that he will not fail to resent that irreverence towards his sacred mandates, to which he cannot but be witness, since Himself makes this solemn interrogation by the mouth of his prophet, * *Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth?* And the apostle too, actuated by his spirit, has assured us, that there is no † *creature which is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked, and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Hence they will be led imperceptibly to take a view of their conduct, whose utter repugnancy to what they owe the author of their existence and

* Jerem. xxiii. 24.

† Heb. iv. 13.

S E R M O N II. 31

happinefs appearing before them more and more forcibly every moment, they will blush and start at the overpowering display, if they are not lost to every virtuous feeling; till they are terrified by the deformity of vice into a resolution to let no action escape them in future but what the all-searching eye of heaven may behold with approbation.

Keep the heart with all diligence, is the salutary precept of the wisest of men. How incumbent upon them to obey it, will be most emphatically inculcated by the consideration that they are ever environed by the presence of a being who is all purity Himself, who has avowed his abhorrence of sin, and whose ability to punish it is equal to his inclination. This is an admonition which they can never repeat to themselves too often. A constant attention to it must effectually banish every symptom of that unbecoming levity which can originate from no other source but internal depravity; for, the fountain once clear and unfullied, the
stream

stream must, of consequence, be also pure and fair. Introducing decorum and sanctity into the heart, it shall naturally communicate rectitude to the manners, and give them a tincture which cannot fail of being pleasing and amiable in the sight of heaven. Circumspect and cautious in their behaviour, submissive and full of veneration in the presence of an earthly prince, shall they keep a less vigorous curb upon themselves, and discover a smaller degree of humiliation in the presence of the King of kings, who inhabiteth Eternity, and in whose eye all the thrones and dominions, all the principalities and powers below are nothing. Shall they presumptuously conduct themselves before him in such a manner as they would tremble at when under the view of one so infinitely inferior! The distance between them how immense! even an angel's comprehensive mind would fail to compute it; a distance immeasurable and endless; the former a sovereign whose *kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominion endureth throughout all ages; who alone spread-*
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S E R M O N II. 33

eth out the heavens, and treadeth on the waves of the sea; who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, who sealetb up the stars, and can with equal ease create or annihilate a world! The latter, what? An abject helpless being, whose duration is limited within the scanty compass of a few fleeting years, or rather the feeble insect of a day, which spreads its brittle wings to the sun, skims and flutters in a few airy rings over the surface of the ground, and then is seen no more.

O Thou! in whom we live, and move, and have our being! First, essential Cause of all things! Thou great, invigorating Soul of nature! that thou art ever present—ever visible, we acknowledge with an enthusiastic joy, yet blended and chastised with that reverence which the thought of thy omnipotence necessarily inspires. Wherever we turn, we behold thy bounty and wisdom fully displayed. To reason's purer eye thou shinest forth in the meanest object that creation presents; in the inanimate and senseless parts of the material world, as well

as in the living and active. Direct we our eyes to what is beautiful and alluring in the variegated prospect around us? Thou art there, all perfection, benevolence, and love. Or contemplate we the rude and tremendous with which the softer charms of nature are so majestically blended? There too thou appearest in a form which produces on the mind the most sedate and solemn impressions. We trace thy footsteps alike on the lofty hill and in the deep descending valley, in the gloomy wood and in the expanded plain. Inspired with sacred transport, we see thee smiling as it were in the flowers and verdure which cloathe the meadows in such simple elegance and charming variety. The fanning breezes diffuse the odoriferous exhalations of the fields around, and the whole air is fragrance; but all this richness of perfume is thy breath alone. When the birds, sweetly warbling their artless notes on every bough, fill the groves with music, thy voice is in the melody. Amidst the brightness of the rising morning thou art seen, unutterably glorious, inimitably fair! And
when

S E R M O N II. 35

when still evening approaches and the gray twilight gently shadows all things, in the milder landscape we behold thee, though arrayed in less splendor, yet not less adorable and lovely. We hear thee in the whispering gale of spring, and in the tempestuous blast of winter. *The day is thine, the night also is thine: Thou hast prepared the light and the Sun. Thou hast made summer and winter.* The seasons, in their various stages and revolutions, are full of thee! the regular and well-ordered changes of the year proclaim the all-presiding God. Universal Parent of Being, wondrous Original of all that is excellent and good! in humble adoration we own thy presence, and climb to the foot of thy throne in ardent strains of thanksgiving and triumph; still offering up the grateful incense of praise, whether thou descendest in lenient dews and gentle showers, refreshing the earth, and infusing through every part vital energy and sweetness, or comest flying in dreadful majesty upon the wings of the whirlwind, pavilioned amidst thick clouds and darkness, and hurling the

36 S E R M O N I I.

furious tempest abroad; whether thou speakest to us amidst the soft murmurs of the sighing gale, or utterest thy voice in the thunder, peal rolling upon peal, and scattering terror and confusion over the trembling world. There is not an atom through the whole extent of Creation which does not confess thy universal hand: Thou still preservest that existence which it first owed to Thee! Diffused as thou art through every point of space, both within the circle of the material system, and beyond it too, in that infinite expansion, that uniform abyss, where thought wanders without end, utterly confounded and lost; diffused too through heaven and the heaven of heavens, how vain to think of flying from Thee! Absurd, deceitful dream! But who among thy creatures can harbour so ungrateful, so depraved a thought? None but he whose accumulated iniquity has eradicated all those pleasing hopes of comfort and protection which flourish in the breast of him whose angelic sanctity of heart and manners establishes

S E R M O N II. 37

tablishes his confidence in the divine goodness on the surest foundations. He only, afraid of meeting thee, would fain turn his head aside from thy beatific Presence, his tortured imagination anticipating the just vengeance of his offended God. But, in spite of all his endeavours, he finds that *thou besettest him behind and before, and layest thy hand upon him*. If he seeks refuge under the sable covert of midnight, and says, *surely the darkness shall conceal me; even the night shall be light about him*. For *the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee*. Preposterous attempt! impious audacity! as soon might he expect to escape from himself as from Thee.

And are we thus awfully circumstanced! Can nothing elude the vigilance of that great and independent Power who fills Immenfity! Whither then for shelter shall the guilty fly? In vain they call on the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him who

38 S E R M O N II.

fitteth on the eternal throne arrayed in dreadful majesty. To what can they have recourse, lamentably situated as they are? The remedy to be applied in so desperate an extremity is ever at hand. 'Tis true, the wounds which sin has torn open in their souls are deep, and apparently incurable. But is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Has not their Saviour himself uttered this gentle invitation? *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* Have they not power to forsake the paths into which folly has enticed them? those fatal paths, where the roses which bloom around in such profusion, and seem so inviting to the touch, conceal beneath their leaves a thousand thorns, to wound and tear the hand which is unhappily held forth to crop them! Shun the alluring road which infallibly leads at last to destruction, and walk in that safer way, which although not quite so smooth and delightful, will soon conduct you to the land of unutterable bliss and everlasting pleasures. Henceforth
determine

S E R M O N II. 39

determine upon such a conduct as shall need no shelter from that unerring Judge, before whose eyes, ten thousand times brighter and more piercing than the sun, the thickest darkness vanishes, the closest disguise gives way. Return without delay, like the repenting prodigal, to that indulgent Father whom you have unnaturally deserted, and bending low before him with all the marks of unfeigned sorrow, earnestly implore his forgiveness, and say, *Father* (if that tender title be yet allowed me), *I have sinned before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Run into the arms of Redeeming Love, widely extended as they are for your reception, and in those sacred streams which stained the bleeding cross, wash your offences away. For so unspeakably gracious is this Redeeming Love, that it will at any time accept the sigh of heart-felt contrition, nor ever turn away from the prayers of the destitute and wretched. Its whole delight is to administer internal succour and tranquillity, to pour the reviving balm of consolation into

40 S E R M O N II.

the minds of the distressed, and heal the wounds of the broken-hearted. And now descending from the skies, it calls you in the most persuasive accents. Lo ! with the hand of a resistless conqueror, it bars up the joyless realms of night, and throws open for your encouragement and admission the gates of everlasting day. The golden opportunity is still offered you of cancelling your former errors, and blotting them out from the records of heaven for ever. With what gratitude and extasy ought this unmerited advantage to overwhelm your hearts ! Properly avail yourselves of it, and then shall you solicit the presence of your Creator as eagerly as you now attempt to fly from it : the cause now of disquietude, trepidation, and dismay, it shall then prove an inexhaustible source of triumph, confidence, and joy. In the season of prosperity it shall heighten your happiness, and in the needful hour of adversity communicate unfailing succour. Obey the injunctions of his love, importunately sue for his favour alone, and spurn
with

S E R M O N II. 41

with indignation every measure which tends to deprive you of it. How harsh and rigorous is the service of that world to which you are so blindly attached ! After all your toil, how precarious your reward ! and even if you obtain it, how unsatisfactory does it prove, how totally different from that source of compleat felicity which it promised and you expected to find ! But the commandments of your Maker are far from being grievous ; the labour of obedience (if a labour) is pleasing, and the recompence certain. *His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.* What does he require of us ? *Not thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil ; but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.* Himself hath told us by his Prophet, that his commandment is *not * hidden from us, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that we should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it ?* He has clearly set before us Good

* Deut. xxx. 11, 12.

and

and Evil, and, as the inseparable consequences of these, Life and death. Choose the former, and then you shall be able to meet him whom now you dread, untrifled—unreluctant, the frowns of his anger appearing no more, but softened down into the endearing smiles of acceptance and mercy.—Every cause removed which could induce them to wish for his absence, they will look back upon their past conduct with horror, and wonder at that presumption which framed so impious a wish. Basking with a pleasure unknown before in the glorious sunshine of his looks, they will shudder at the bare idea of that melancholy gloom in which they were formerly involved.

How opposite are the emotions which seize upon the breast of guilt to those which the good man experiences when he casts his view around him! He with ineffable delight contemplates the Omnipresent Deity. Unblemished with the commission of any deed which would shun the inspection

S E R M O N II. 43

tion of his all-pervading glance, he can look up to heaven with an heart-felt complacency and confidence which all the treasures of the universe cannot purchase, nor all its powers combined take away. It is the idea of being encircled on every side by eternal Majesty and goodness, which constitutes the happiness of his life. Deprive him of this grand support, and all his hopes and comforts fall in a moment to the ground. His faculties all refined and transformed as it were by its celestial energy, he sees the face of nature in a point of view unknown to the rest of mankind. Every object receives a tincture from that beam of heavenly light which irradiates his soul. To his eye the sun darts forth an additional splendor, and earth and skies appear more beautiful; for both in earth and skies, Communicative Source of beauty and perfection! he discovers nothing but Thee. That inward serenity and composure, that holy and uniform glow of satisfaction which he feels from a consciousness of the universality of the Great Essential Presence, diffuses

44 S E R M O N II.

diffuses new charms and lustre over every thing around him. Forms which are invisible to the gross eye of sensuality disclose themselves to his purer organs, arrayed in all the graces of heaven, and unite with him in blissful intercourse. Voices with which the wicked are never favoured are continually sounding in his ear, and, in seraphic accents, whispering sacred peace and rapture to his soul ! When the iron shafts of adversity fly thick around him, and the gathering clouds of affliction come lowering over his head, his heart is a stranger to fear, he suffers not his fortitude to droop, but cries out, Thou, my God, art ever with me, Thou art on my right hand and on my left. Why should I fear, surrounded with such a defence ? *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt sustain and comfort me, Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the fury of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. Thou art my rock and impregnable fortress. Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever !*

Were

S E R M O N II. 45

Were it possible for the person of this devout description to suppose, that his heavenly Maker could once be absent, or indifferent to the concerns of his creatures, how disconsolate an appearance to his view would the face of nature wear ! the whole world would seem a meer empty solitude, and its most beautiful scenes a formless gloomy chaos. To be deserted by this best of friends, would be a thousand times more terrible than death itself. Father of light and life ! since thou art continually present to dispense thy aid, no enterprize seems arduous to him, no suffering seems severe. But shouldst thou withdraw thy enlivening presence from him, all his supports would vanish in a moment, all his faculties would seem suspended ; every difficulty would become insuperable, every affliction intolerable. The consolations which the officious world could offer would communicate no solid joy, nor even a transient gleam of satisfaction.

Thrice

46 S E R M O N II.

Thrice happy he, who, thus under every event, is the same—all trust, submission, and complacency : and none but the man can be so, who entertains a proper conviction of the divine omnipresence. Profoundly impressed with this animating idea, he cannot complain ; or, if he should be prompted by adversity and distress to join the mournful exclamations of the Psalmist, *I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me*, it is only for a moment ; he immediately recollects himself, his better thoughts prevail : conscious that his witness is in heaven, and his record on high, that his God bears continual testimony to his invariable adherence to his duty, he cries, *Thy will be done ;* This consideration banishes every symptom of despondency, and calms the tumult of his soul. Should it be his fate to transfer his abode into distant and inhospitable climes, to exchange his loved native soil for the scorching sands of Libya or the snows of Zembla, he would not hesitate a moment ; but, like the Patriarch, who,
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S E R M O N II. 47

in obedience to the divine call, relinquished his kindred and his father's house, would chearfully comply; for well he knows, that to whatever region he is removed, he cannot be where his God is absent; and therefore to him all places are alike. Were I placed (says he) in the remotest and most desolate corner of the universe, even there should thy hand lead me; and thy right hand should hold me. I cannot go where the traces of thy goodness are not visible.

The reflection that he is supported by an almighty arm, and overshadowed by an all-protecting wing, would cheer him benumbed on frozen plains, or panting amidst the torrid wilderness; it would have power to convert the forlorn and dreary solitude, where neither human face ever appeared, nor human foot ever trod, into a lively blooming landscape, crowned with unfading flowers and verdure; it would make Paradise itself spring around him. In a word, the felicity which he derives from the con-
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deration

48 S E R M O N II.

deration of an Omnipresent Creator, is equal to the intense dread and torment which the same thought communicates to the minds of the depraved and vicious.

So enviable a satisfaction, such exalted joy, who would not wish to experience? What advantage of intellect or fortune is worthy to be compared with such celestial confidence and equanimity! Let us then assiduously pursue the conduct necessary for obtaining it, uniting with our own efforts our ardent supplications to Him from whom alone every good and every perfect gift descends. Let our minds be for ever impressed with the idea of a Being, armed with irresistible power, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind, who occupies Eternity and Immenfity, to whom every thought we form is perfectly known, and from whom no secrets are hid, who will come at the final retribution of all things with majesty and glory inconceivable to judge the world he made, attended by cherubim and seraphim,

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and

and all the orders of angels ten thousand times ten thousand ; while all who are in the graves shall hear his voice, and, summoned by the thunder of the awful trump, crowd in innumerable millions around his great tribunal, the bad destined to the regions of infernal night, but the good to the radiant seats of never-ending day, there to shine like the brightness of the firmament, and like the stars for ever and ever !

Yes! He shall come (his own word has declared it) and with a sun-beam point out, in the view both of men and angels, our inmost conceptions, and, according to our negligence or industry in regulating them, shall hurl us down to everlasting punishment, or, consigning us to Life eternal, give his angels charge to waft us on their wings up to the mansions of immortal bliss. Let this most important of truths maintain an unlimited influence over our thoughts, words, and actions, in order to put the whole train of vice and vanity to flight. But

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50 S E R M O N II.

more particularly should it be enforced upon the soul when anger, revenge, or any other internal foe to our repose, begins to steal upon us, that it may check the least commotion at the moment of its birth, lest, in consequence of indulgence, it rise to a tempest not to be appeased, and bear down before it with irresistible violence all the fine affections of the soul—those affections, the constant culture of which is so essential both to its temporal tranquillity and its eternal welfare. By an indefatigable vigilance, we shall fortify it against every bad impression. Removing from our eyes that film which obscures them, those pernicious vapours which arise from too close attention to the objects of sense, we shall view distinctly, and with solemn joy, the Deity every where diffused around us. Hence in every emergency support and consolation shall be ours. We shall rise superior to the little accidents of life, and possess minds not to be ruffled by the vicissitudes of fate, not to be injured by its fiercest storms. Whatever dangers and distresses can befall us, their united at-

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S E R M O N II. 51

tacks shall not shake, much less overcome us; dejection and despair shall be far from our bosoms. For is it possible to sink beneath the heaviest burden that misfortune can inflict, if we consider that Omnipotence and unbounded mercy surround us, and will, if our real good requires it, repel the darts that assail us in the twinkling of an eye, and convert our mourning into joy. Yes (enlivening thought! powerful cordial to the wounded and drooping heart!) though plunged into the lowest abyss of grief and misery, our God would find us; a ray of comfort from him would dart across our breasts, and, dissipating the horrid night in which we sit enveloped, give us a glimmering of celestial day!

Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart, prove me, and examine my thoughts, was the devout ejaculation suggested to the Psalmist by the awful contemplation of his great Creator's ubiquity. Nor, can any thing be more just and becoming than this

52 S E R M O N II.

fervent petition; for since our most trivial imaginations as well as actions are to become the objects of the divine scrutiny and judgment hereafter, it is of the utmost consequence to beg the divine assistance here, in order to keep them in due subordination to the sense of our duty. Alarming and terrible investigation! Oh how will they undergo so strict, so impartial a test! Who can tell how often he offendeth? O eradicate every latent mischief from my heart, and *cleanse me from my secret faults*. Happy the man, if such there be, who can say, I have a conscience void of offence. How averse are we by nature to that which is good! how prone to that which is evil! My God, *if thou art extreme to mark what is done amiss, oh, who shall be able to endure it!* Situated as we are, how ought our affections to be elevated above sublunary things! All our thoughts and inclinations should either come from or go to heaven, like the angelic host ascending and descending upon the mystic ladder in the favoured patriarch's vision.

O Thou

S E R M O N II. 53

O Thou, who takest *no pleasure in the death of a sinner but hadst rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*, Maker of all things, omniscient Judge of all men! look down with an eye of paternal compassion on the infirmities of thy offending creatures. In consideration of the merits and atonement of thy Son Jesus Christ, pardon the affronts of which we from time to time have been guilty, by thought, word, and deed, towards thy divine majesty. The remembrance of them is grievous and oppressive to our souls, the burden of them is intolerable. All-righteous Inspector of the heart, Thou who art witness to every lurking embryo of vice and folly there, think upon the frailty of our frame, consider that we are but dust, and have mercy upon us. Influence us by the operation of thy Spirit to forsake the paths of iniquity, and lead us in the way everlasting: that we may be qualified for appearing at thy august tribunal on that decisive day, when the great archangel's trump shall summon the trembling universe to judgment;

54 S E R M O N II.

ment; for *if the righteous themselves scarcely be saved*, if even their best actions are unworthy of thy acceptance, *where, oh where, in that tremendous crisis, shall the ungodly and the sinner appear!*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

REVELATIONS vii. 17.

The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

WHAT a profusion of genuine and exalted bliss is promised here! but to whom? to them who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: in other words, to them who deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow their Saviour with a resolution to war, under his holy banners, with whatever militates against their duty. The

56 S E R M O N III.

whole sacred Volumes do not present us with a passage more beautifully descriptive of the felicity enjoyed by the inhabitants of the celestial regions, than these words of the inspired Evangelist. How lively and delightful an image do they convey to the mind! How admirably calculated are they for administering comfort to the heart when torn with anguish! they can alleviate the burden of the heaviest distress, and blunt the stings of the most pungent sorrow. It was indeed for this gracious end that they were uttered by the Spirit of truth and love. And when we reflect on the numerous calamities and dire persecutions which afterwards assailed the Christian Church, we cannot but think them peculiarly seasonable, and even highly necessary, together with all the other discoveries contained in this sublime and mysterious book, the Apocalypse. Without some consolation of this nature, it must inevitably have sunk beneath the accumulated weight of its afflictions. But leaning on the impregnable support which the animating promises contained

S E R M O N III. 57

tained in this Book afforded it, encouraged by those dazzling prospects of future felicity here fully displayed before its view, it remained steadfast and immoveable, it defied the united attacks of its adversaries, and still rose superior in that vehement contest which the kingdom of darkness, actuated by implacable malice, maintained against the kingdom of light. Thus assured that it was distinguished by the care of an Almighty Protector, who watched with particular attention over its interest, it persevered in its attachment to that Religion which it had received from above with a fortitude and magnanimity more than human. That wonderful constancy which so signally distinguished it from all others, and that inexhaustible fund of comfort which it experienced, were all derived from this source. Well it knew that its light affliction was but for a moment, and would work out for it a weight of glory, not only superlatively great, but, what is more, eternal.

The

The most inveterate foe to Christianity, on reading the account of those unparalleled barbarities and torments which the adherents to this Religion preferred before the relinquishment of it, cannot but infer, that stupendous indeed must be the efficacy of that Creed which could support the mind in such great and terrible extremities. The difficulties and perils which they had to encounter with, during the primitive ages, would have been sufficient to subdue the resolutions, and frustrate the philosophy of the best and wisest among the heathens. But, to the immortal honour of the Christian Name it is recorded, that the severest trials and the most excruciating bodily inflictions could not repress the ardor of their zeal; their allegiance to their heavenly Leader continued still uniform and inviolate. Nothing appeared intolerable or tremendous, nothing hard or discouraging, while they looked not at the things which were seen, but at the things which were not seen: they turned away their eyes with contempt from temporal and earthly objects, and kept them continually fixed on
things

S E R M O N III. 59

things celestial and eternal. They had an incorruptible Crown in view : this kindled within them a degree of divine emulation ; and they ran to obtain it with indefatigable industry. They had received an explicit assurance from above (and they required no more) that if they finished their toilsome pilgrimage here below with the approbation of their God, and persisted in their obedience even to death, they should participate in the inheritance of the Saints in light, that the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne should feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters, and that God himself should wipe away every tear from their eyes.

It is worthy of our observation, that in this figurative and sublime passage the images are borrowed from scenes of rural life. These, it is well known, have in all ages been regarded as the principal abodes of innocence and happiness. This is not only the language of the poet, but of the historian also. Both have concurred in informing

60 S E R M O N III.

forming us, that less of depravity and guilt is to be met with in these seats of tranquillity than in the more exposed and frequented paths of life; and that they are privileged, in some measure, with an immunity from the common lot entailed on every other place below, vexation, disappointment, and misery. This seems the reason that the joys of the heavenly spirits are represented under the figure of sylvan scenes. That exuberance of bliss which surrounds them is metaphorically expressed by living fountains of waters. What propriety and beauty characterize the expression! How pleasing the idea which it excites! the fountain being no less refreshing and agreeable to the imagination than to the groves and meadows through which it flows, and by that vital nourishment and renovation of vigour which it dispenses to the traveller fainting with excess of thirst and weariness, happily giving an idea of that complete beatitude, which, overflowing the divine abodes, refreshes, invigorates, and (if I may be allowed the expression) celest-

S E R M O N III. 61

celestializes more and more the nature of the sons of light. It would have been impossible to delineate objects so great and exalted, so infinitely removed from sense, by any other means with any degree of success. The inspired authors seem to have been convinced by their use of rural imagery on every great occasion, that it was the most proper for conveying in a striking manner ideas of innocence and simplicity. Accordingly the Saviour of the world himself is styled the immaculate and unblemished lamb: how expressive an emblem of his inoffensive demeanour, his unpresuming gentleness and meekness! and, in other places of the sacred writings, he engages our veneration, and commands our love, under the character of a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering the lambs with his arm, carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young. This indeed is a character which he seems to take a peculiar pleasure in assuming; representing, by that solicitude and vigilance with which the good shepherd

shepherd provides for the safety and welfare of his flock, his own unbounded regard and affection for his creatures.

But to revert to the point whence we have been unavoidably led away, the most agreeable and charming picture which the natural world can suggest is here applied in the most judicious manner to that pure and immense felicity enjoyed in the immaterial world. We can, however, form but a very imperfect idea of it from this description, which, although the most adequate that human language could furnish, is yet very far from corresponding with the grandeur and sublimity of its subject. It is indeed beyond the ability of human fancy to delineate it in its native lustre and perfection. How can a frail finite comprehension grasp what is infinite? Attempt it not, O mortal, but employ the few fleeting years allotted thee here, in a manner more suitable to thy nature and dependant state. Look up to heaven with an eye of humble confidence and hope; contemplate the bright
rewards

S E R M O N III. 63

rewards reserved for unfullied integrity and goodness, not with a motive of idle curiosity, and for the sake of acquiring fame by thy profound researches, but with the nobler view of animating thy obedience, and be ever solicitous to pursue such a course of action as cannot fail of entitling thee to those rewards. Although infinitely surpassing thy deserts, yet they are placed within thy reach by the indulgence of a dying Saviour, whose all-sufficient merits will atone for thy deficiencies, and give thee a competent claim, in thy Maker's sight, to those inestimable privileges.

The Apostle tells us, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what an inexhaustible fund of happiness God hath prepared for them that love him. How glorious a prize is exhibited to stimulate our industry! Here we behold the great distinction which constitutes the dignity and glory of humanity. Man is a feeble helpless being, liable to a thousand disasters and inconveniences

veniences which he can neither foresee nor remove. Dwelling in a world where every thing is pregnant with vicissitudes and sorrows, solitary and forlorn indeed would be his lot, were his existence, views, and expectations to terminate with the present life. Instead of having been made, according to the royal Psalmist's description, but little inferior to the angels, and crowned with glory and honour, he would be inferior, upon the whole, even to the brutal part of the creation. In short, the hope once removed of a state of blissful retribution in a future world, man were of all creatures the most miserable; his condition here would become an inexplicable mystery. But when we extend our view beyond the grave, when we consider that the present is but the earnest as it were, the opening bud, the first imperfect stage of his existence, and contemplate the unbounded joys reserved for the just when this faint dawning of terrestrial life shall be over, and the vast honors destined as their portion through all Eternity, each gloomy shade vanishes, the
prospect

S E R M O N III. 65

prospect quickly clears up, and brightens into meridian day. How full of extasy the thought, that, when death releases him from the gross impediment of clay which keeps him groveling here below, he shall rise to the life of angels, see his glorious Maker face to face, and bask in the noon-day blaze of his perfections, in those regions where reigns fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore!

Hail, ye exalted scenes of permanent felicity! hail, ye enjoyments! ye which alone are worthy of the name! Immeasurably great, ineffably delightful, exempt from decay or diminution, for ever flowing in one constant, regular, and copious stream! how perfect a contrast do ye form to the disappointments, vexation, and misery which infest these dreary climes below! How contemptible, when set in competition with you, appears every joy and every pleasure here! When your transcendent glories engage the imagination, those fond desires, which had attached themselves so eagerly to sub-

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lunary

66 S E R M O N III.

lunary trifles, relinquish their hold, and fix themselves on you and heaven alone. Looking around him on this wretched world, and comparing its poor imperfect gratifications, precarious at best, with that consummate bliss which ye cannot fail to communicate, the good man wishes for the wings of a dove that he may fly away, and be at rest with you. 'Tis nothing but a perpetuity of happiness which ought to engage our attention and pursuit. We look in vain for this perpetuity below; we look in vain for happiness indeed: had it been attainable in this defective state, it could not possibly have eluded the anxious and unwearied search of Solomon, the greatest of monarchs, and the wisest of men. His elevation above the rest of mankind, no less by his consummate abilities and wisdom than by his imperial rank and dignity, gave him opportunities and advantages which no other person ever enjoyed. Happiness was the constant object of his desires: he sought it in wealth, magnificence, honour, knowledge, and pleasure; he sought it assiduously,
but

S E R M O N III. 67

but he found it not. It still fled before him, like an empty shadow, an illusive phantom. Sad experience presently convinced him, that all beneath the sun was vanity and vexation of Spirit! Yes, the sublime delights of heaven alone are perpetual and completely satisfactory; they alone are immutable and eternal; and consequently to them alone ought our affections and our wishes to aspire!

Hither then, O my soul, turn all thy care. Purify thyself from that feculence which thou hast contracted from a perpetual intercourse with the world. Renounce those sordid aims which centre in terrestrial pleasures alone, and devote thyself to employments more congenial with thy nature. Cast off the fetters which confine thee to this low ball of earth, and rise on the eagle wings of devotion into the heaven of heavens. Behold the mansions of everlasting day opening wide their crystal portals, to admit thee; behold angels beckoning from the skies, and calling thee to participate in

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those

68 S E R M O N III.

those divine enjoyments which thy Redeemer, by the effusion of his sacred blood, hath procured for thee and all mankind. Go then and dwell for ever there. For the sake of those enjoyments, think nothing too valuable to resign. On them keep thy view for ever riveted; and then earthly temptations shall call thee down in vain; the splendor of sublunary excellence shall fade, and mortal pomp and glory lose their charms. The endeavour to attain those infinitely superiour objects shall entirely supersede every other concern. Weigh the glorious acquisition against whatever toil or difficulty may attend it, and it cannot fail instantaneously to preponderate; it shall abundantly overpay any temporary inconvenience that thou mayst sustain. 'Tis this consideration which ought to make the sufferings of the present moment appear light, and unworthy of a single complaint. 'Twas this which made St. Paul exclaim, at the thought of the fetters and afflictions which the Holy Spirit had announced as his doom in every city, None of these things move me. Having a promise of that Crown of
 Glory

S E R M O N III. 69

Glory which never fades away, of those immense rewards which transcend all conception, misery, if it forms a just and rational comparison, must think itself more than recompensed for every tear which it can shed, and every groan which rends its bosom.

Cease then, child of affliction, whoever thou art, to waste thy hours in fruitless lamentations, and to breathe out the dictates of impatience and despair. Dost thou languish beneath the iron rod of oppression and tyranny? support thy drooping heart with the reflection that thou knowest at present but in part, that only a very small part of the great plan of Providence lies open to thy view, and therefore the judgment which thou passest on the whole must be extremely defective and fallacious; but that a time shall arrive, when thou shalt know even as thou art known, when the whole system shall be displayed before thee, and the mutual dependence and harmony of all its parts appear conspicuous at first sight. Then shall these abodes of violence, injustice, and cruelty, be exchanged for those

70 S E R M O N III.

more inviting seats, that charming land of peace, which the wicked can never trouble, and where the weary are at rest, where the prisoners of insolent and arbitrary power enjoy unmolested liberty, and the voice of the oppressor is heard no more. Be not therefore weary in well-doing, for in due season thou shalt reap the rich harvest of thy virtue, if thou faint not. Or hast thou experienced some grievous loss, irreparable here below, which bends thy soul to the dust in all the bitterness of grief and anguish? Has the friend of thy bosom, the child of thy heart, or the wife who was dearer to thee than life itself, fallen a victim to the great destroyer of human comfort, death, or been snatched from thee by some uncommon and dreadful blow of fate? Yet suppress every murmur. Look upwards to those happy regions where all which thou hast lost shall be restored to thee far more valuable and worthy of thy affections than before; where thou, who canst not call a single moment here thy own, short-lived as the fading flower, transient as the passing gale, shalt be exalted to a felicity, of which no cruel accident

S E R M O N III. 71

dent can ever deprive thee, and which no revolution of time or fate can diminish or injure; a felicity, which when thousands and ten thousands of ages have taken their flight, shall be still immutable, yet never apt to cloy, commensurate with the existence of the Deity himself, flourishing and fair through all eternity! How vast, how stupendous a duration! Who * can number the sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of eternity! anticipate that joyful period, when that which is perfect being come, and that which is in part being done away, thou, no longer the victim of licentious power, no longer doomed to drink of the cup of bitterness and woe, shalt mingle with angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven, if thou discharge thy duty on earth with that conscientious fidelity which characterizes the servant of the Most High! Then shalt thou be admitted to the blissful society of the sons of Light, and adore the unveiled perfections of the Godhead, with that radiant multitude which no man can num-

* Wisd. chap. i.

72 S E R M O N III.

ber, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, cloathed in white robes, and bearing palms in their hands. The starry crowns, the reward of persevering virtue, shall be thine; the Lamb himself shall lead thee to living fountains of delight, and rivers of ever-flowing bliss, there to refresh thyself with copious draughts; and even thy God shall wipe away all tears from thine eyes. Placed in contrast with this, the severest trials which can fall to thy lot will lose all their terrors, and thy afflictions pass away like the morning cloud, and like the early dew.

Surely, were this consideration indulged with that ardor and confidence which it deserves, were the hope of immortal felicity suffered to operate with its full energy and force, it must have the happiest effect on human life; the evils which infest the world, and render it the abode of misery, would be totally eradicated and banished; the whole aspect of the universe would be changed;

S E R M O N III. 73

changed; then would innocence descend from heaven in its genuine purity, and that golden age, which the poets fabled, be completely realized; universal peace and harmony would reign over the world. But this blissful æra we cannot expect to see while such a blind and immoderate attachment to secular concerns prevails. Yet, upon a rational estimation, what is opulence or honour? What is dignity or renown? What all the pomp and parade which so much inchant mankind? Are these the shrines at which they bow? Are these the idols which beings, destined for immortality, adore! Glittering images of air, momentary delusions! Can these brighten the gloom of the dying hour? Can these alleviate the final pang, or purchase one moment's reprieve from the king of terrors? Unthinking and imprudent votaries, do they ever afford you that satisfaction which they promised? How preposterous to set such perishable baubles in the balance with an immortal crown! Can they communicate to the mind any solid, or even the smallest, relief in the pensive season

season

season of distress? No; but this the hope of a future recompence in heaven can do: yes, it can effectually support the soul in the most alarming and disastrous exigencies. Ask the martyr at the stake what it is that sustains his fortitude, makes him look down with an aspect so tranquil and serene upon the instruments of his torture, and smile at death itself. O Jesu, (he cries) adorable name! in thee is my confidence and hope. This day, thou hast assured me I shall be with thee in paradise. Welcome, thrice welcome, the devouring flame, since it will translate me so soon to thee! Adieu, ye regions of disquietude and sorrow! Mortality is vanquished. The curtain drops, the immortal world appears. Ten thousand dazzling wonders rise before me! I see the heaven of heavens disclosing all its glories! I forget my torments, they make not the smallest impression upon me! I find myself changed, my earthly nature refining into heavenly, and dissolving in beatific joy, in transports inexpressible!

'Twas

S E R M O N III. 75

"Twas on those ineffably reviving and glorious prospects, which open beyond the grave, the Apostle's view was fixed, when he said with an air of triumph, that, although troubled on every side, he was not distressed; although perplexed, he was not in despair; although persecuted, he was not forsaken; although cast down, not destroyed; and that although his material frame decayed and perished, yet his purer and immortal part was renewed and strengthened day by day. He knew that if this earthly tabernacle were dissolved, he had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

What thanks, what praises then, Redeeming Love, are due to thee! thou who hast thrown open before us the gates of everlasting day, unlocked for us those rich and inexhaustible springs of consolation, and placed within our reach the bliss of angels! Hadst thou not interposed, alas! what had been the condition of fallen and miserable man! Instead of that celestial paradise, which now displays itself before
him

76 S E R M O N III.

him in full and transporting prospect, the hideous mansions of desolation and despair must inevitably have been his doom. Fancy shudders at the bare view of his forlorn situation, and description drops its pencil, unable to draw the gloomy picture.

Revolving in our minds this circumstance, glow not our hearts with the most exalted sentiments of gratitude and reverence? Do we not adore, with unfeigned affection, a bleeding Saviour, who died to restore and bless his fallen creatures—died to rescue them from endless death; and by his resurrection from the dismal caverns of the tomb procured for them an inheritance incorruptible, celestial, and which fadeth not away.

Encouraged by the repeated and express assurances of eternal happiness which he has given us, let us now proceed through the darksome vale of mortal life, with a joy and triumph which depends not on worldly contingencies. Whatever temptations

S E R M O N III. 77

tions arise, let us not relax a moment that discipline which he enjoins; whatever troubles we have to encounter with, let them not deter us from the performance of our duty; that when this preliminary state is over, when this dim twilight of temporal existence has vanished away, immortal felicity may dawn upon us, and our spirits be translated to those regions where all is unclouded day and beatific tranquillity; where the just, fully crowned with the glorious rewards of their obedience, now shine like the brightness of the firmament, and like the stars, for ever and ever!

Remains to be said

SER:

S E R M O N IV.

REVELATION X. I.

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, cloathed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

IN this solemn book, the Apocalypse, with what an air of awful grandeur is the veil removed from futurity, and a multiplicity of successive events revealed which the church of God was destined to experience in remote periods ! The diversity of scenes here displayed to our view is remarkably great and striking : they are at one time mournful and terrible ; at another, equally

80 S E R M O N IV.

equally animating and delightful. St. John, in the two preceding chapters, foretells nothing but calamities and woes: his mystic vision is of the most dolorous and terrific nature. He tells us, that he saw the seven angels who stood before the throne of God: and to them were given seven trumpets; six of which were presently sounded in due order. The universe, aghast and trembling, confessed the power of the tremendous blast, and assumed the most melancholy aspect; an impetuous tempest of hail and fire, mingled with blood, ensued; and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the living creatures in the sea died. The sun was smitten, and the moon, and the stars, and deprived of a third part of their light. The bottomless abyſs was opened, out of which arose, with sudden and furious eruption, black torrents of sulphureous smoke, like the steams of a mighty furnace, diffusing their pitchy horrors far and wide, insomuch that they entirely darkened the sun and all the air. In short, the face of nature resembled

S E R M O N IV 81

sembled the prophet's roll, which was written both within and without, with lamentation, and mourning, and woe ! But now a fairer scene succeeds. A mighty angel descends from heaven clothed in a lucid cloud, a rainbow with its orient circlet surrounding his head, the glories of his face outshining the splendor of the meridian sun, and his feet seeming to burn like two pillars of fire ! In this stupendous vision we have the most solemn yet delightful union of the majestic, the beautiful, and the terrible. How wonderful an effect must so magnificent and august a display have had upon the Evangelist ! What sublime ideas, sublime beyond all description, must it necessarily have inspired ! How must it have revived his drooping heart, and soothed his terrified spirit, after so great a contrast, the scene of woe and horror to which he had been witness ! Deeply impressed as he was with a genuine zeal for the church, and an affectionate solicitude for its welfare through succeeding ages, his mind must have been greatly de-

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jected by the view of those oppressions and afflictions which Abaddon, the enraged sovereign of the abyss, was preparing for it. Alas ! (would despondency have exclaimed at so mournful an exhibition) shall nothing be heard but the hostile voice of persecution ? Shall piety and goodness be perpetually the victims of wanton and outrageous cruelty ? So disastrous a destiny, such a load of complicated distresses, who can endure ? What heart so steeled with fortitude as to be capable of opposing the unintermitted assault, and of repelling the approach of despondency and dismay ? No, this is by no means the case. Behold, the impetuous career of brutal bigotry and superstition is checked ; consolation dawns upon us from above. Exult, ye who combat under the banners of the Cross, triumph over the powers of darkness ; an angelic guardian descends to espouse your cause, frustrate the insidious machinations of your adversaries, and overwhelm them with everlasting confusion. He comes to patronize the oppressed, to protect the injured

S E R M O N IV. 83

jured and helpless. Now has the Church abundant cause for joy. The happy period is arrived which the prophet foresaw, when he addressed her in this animated language: *Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.*

Various have been the conjectures of the learned in regard to this mysterious and sublime appearance. Some suppose it to be a created angel; but there seems to be little or no fundamental ground for this supposition. Others, with far greater probability, alledge it to be no less a personage than the Son of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ: and this hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the last verse in this chapter, *And he said unto me, thou must prophesy again before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings.* In this passage he seems to use the term *thou*, as general, not as relating

84 S E R M O N I V.

to St. John only, but to all the zealous and faithful professors of his religion, who are sent out as his delegates to prophesy, to promulgate his will, and disseminate the joyful tidings of the gospel. He invested his disciples with power before his ascension to evangelize the whole world; and in the same manner, at this time, other holy missionaries are dispatched to prophesy again. Now we are not ignorant, that to give a commission of so important a nature, and endow with competent abilities for its execution, is the prerogative of Jesus Christ alone. No inferior and created Being could transfer such power to another, or be authorized to deliver so great and peremptory a charge; to which may be added a parallel and equally momentous one in the beginning of the subsequent chapter: *I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.* From the concurrent testimony of these two passages, it is obvious, that this is the identical personage to whom all power,

S E R M O N IV. 85

power, both in heaven and earth, is given by the Father, even our blessed Lord himself.

But they who dissent from this opinion will say, does not St. John himself call him an angel? This is true; but does not another Apostle inform them, that he assumed not the nature of angels? Therefore this appellation is not given him in regard to his nature, but his office, for we are told, that he is the angel or messenger of the covenant; the term angel, in its primary acceptation, signifying nothing more than a messenger; which is a denomination very applicable to him, as being commissioned, by his Almighty Father, to declare his sovereign ordinances. Lo! he now descends from the empyreal courts of the King of kings, the eternally Supreme; as the great ambassador, to announce the will of the Most High, proclaim consolation to his persecuted saints, and negotiate with mankind affairs of the most lasting and indisputable importance. How peculiarly

86 S E R M O N IV.

liarly worthy of our minute, yet reverential observation, is this august and wonderful appearance !

He is said to come down from heaven. We read in the preceding chapter, that Abaddon, or Apollyon, the gloomy monarch of the abyfs, arose out of his unfathomable gulph below, and blotted out the sun with infernal darkness : but here we see our Lord taking a course diametrically contrary ; he descends from the regions above, and overwhelms us, as it were, with an inundation of celestial light and glory. By way of exposition in this place, some assert, that his descent does not import any local motion ; for in the same nature wherein he was crucified, and died, he rose from the grave, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and the heavens must contain him till his grand return at the final consummation of all things. He departed in his human nature, but remains in his divine ; he ascended in that nature whereby he is
but

S E R M O N IV. 87

but in one place ; he remains by his ubiquity, or that nature whereby he is every where. But why all this metaphysical refinement and subtilty of argumentation ? Is it possible to disjoin the idea of local motion from a descent ? Is there any absurdity in supposing, that this glorious form really descended, or seemed to descend, in the view of the Evangelist ? This observation seems to favour too much of the abstruse, to be beneficial to the practical theologian, raises an unnecessary difficulty, and utterly obscures what it attempts to elucidate.

In the next place, a rainbow was upon his head. It is well known that the rainbow is a symbol of that propitious covenant which the Almighty once condescended to make with his creatures,——instituted by himself, as the signal of his promise never to drown the world again. Beautifully encircling with its radiant wreath our Saviour's head in this vision, it is a pacific emblem of amity and favour towards the sincere adhe-

88 S E R M O N IV.

rents to his religion, and indicates that as the deluge which was sent in early times shall never more overwhelm the earth, so neither shall the torrent of heresy and persecution overflow his church again; and that although his dispensations are mysterious and inscrutable, his gracious covenant is ever in his view, he cannot forfeit his veracity, but, however he may think proper to exercise the patience of his saints, all things shall, in the final result, co-operate for their advantage.

His face was as it were the sun. This completely coincides with the description given of the Son of man in the first vision of St. John, *His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength*; another circumstance which corroborates the opinion that this illustrious personage is Jesus Christ himself. Indeed, that description in other parts bears a great analogy to the representation which is now the subject of animadversion.

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S E R M O N IV. 89

He comes, his face outshining the radiance of the sun, to illumine each gloomy remaining shade of intellectual night, and dispel the sulphureous vapours and black contagions which the venomous breath of his enemy has diffused over the world. What simile can convey a just idea of the celestial splendors with which he is environed! But in order to mitigate the insufferable blaze of his glories, and accommodate himself to the feeble view of humanity, he is cloathed with a cloud: enshrined as it were in this furrounding veil, the Evangelist could gaze upon the resplendent object with delight, yet blended and chastised with the profoundest reverence and awe. Thus upon the mountain of the Transfiguration a cloud overshadowed the three disciples whom he selected to be witnesses of the dazzling vision, and sheltered them from his overpowering brightness: for, did he display himself to the eye of his creatures in all his genuine majesty and native effulgence, how could their frail imperfect faculties sustain the impetuous shock which the unallayed

90 S E R M O N IV.

allayed and cloudless beams of his countenance must occasion; the mighty rush of heavenly and stupendous light would overwhelm their earthly nature, and utterly consume a frame which is impotence and infirmity itself, nothing but dust and ashes. *There shall no man see me, and live,* said the Almighty to his prophet Moses. Therefore, while his glory passed by, and all the Deity blazed forth with irresistible and intolerable radiance, he beneficently condescended to shelter him in a cleft of the rock, and covered him with his protecting hand, which he withdrew not till he had entirely passed by; and his hinder parts alone remained to be seen.

Adorable and gracious Lord! how opposite in every respect is thy conduct to the practice of thy infernal foe! While he secures and preserves his kingdom by darkness, Thou chusest to confirm and promote thy beatific empire by means of light. Thou descendest upon earth to suppress and abolish his reign, to reveal and destroy the works
of

S E R M O N IV. 91

of darknefs. It is thy benevolent office to point out the way of life and immortality to bewildered erring mortals, and make them children of light, and heirs of a never-fading Crown of glory in the heavens.

In the laft place, his feet are as pillars of fire. Pillars are emblems of ftability. They intimate his refolute and inflexible conftancy in adhering to his purpofe: his feet, where fixed, are immoveable; nor ftrength of man, nor power of darknefs, can in the fmalleft degree alter their pofition. His difpenfations both in the world of nature and of grace are ftadfaft and invariable. He is not a man, that he fhould lie. Has he fworn, and fhall he not perform it? The Eternal, He who is infinite wifdom itfelf, muft neceffarily be fuperior to the mutability of fickle, breathing duft. He cannot reverfe his decree, nor falhfy his word; but juft are all his ways, and true: he is immutably good, the fame yefterday, to-day, and for ever.

Having thus examined with veneration full of awe this majestic appearance, and attempted

92 S E R M O N IV.

tempted to unfold the mysterious, and illustrate the obscure, it seems natural to enquire, in what manner did this celestial vision deliver his solemn embassy? The inspired spectator informs us, that, having set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and seven thunders having sounded their awful peal, he lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him who liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and earth, and all that is therein, that there should be time no longer: or (as it might be more emphatically, as well as more elegantly translated, did we literally follow the original Greek) that time shall be no more *.

Solemn and awful indeed in this declaration! alarming to the bad, but replete with comfort and joy to the virtuous. The decisive day is advancing, when the divine mysteries shall be accomplished, when the

* Exactly thus is the passage expressed in the Greek Testament, χρόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι.

S E R M O N IV. 93

blast of the seventh trumpet thundering with terrific clangor through the sky, and echoing from world to world, shall fill the universe, and Time shall be no more! The six trumpets have already sounded: when the seventh shall blow, a total change shall take place throughout the Creation; the vast globe which we now inhabit shall dissolve, and mingle with yon beauteous azure firmament, with sun, and moon, and all the immense luminaries flaming there, in one undistinguished ruin; all shall vanish away like a fleeting vapour, a visionary phantom of the night, and not a single trace of them be found! Even the last enemy, Death, shall be destroyed, and time itself shall be no more! Let us then rationally employ it while it continues with us. Those golden minutes which were assigned us to be sanctified by good actions are hastening away, irrevocable in their flight. The grand consummation of all things approaches fast, every moment brings us nearer to this awful period.

What

94 S E R M O N IV:

What similitude can convey an adequate idea of the transcendent worth of time? It is a pearl of infinite price, an inestimable treasure, for, being properly applied, it purchases for man the life of angels, and a blissful eternity. Conscious of its importance, let us parsimoniously use it, for jealous avarice here is the height of virtue! How apt are we to mistake its value! How many irretrievable and fatal errors are committed in this particular!

The hieroglyphical symbols, by which the Egyptians represented it, were extremely applicable and significant. They depicted it by a serpent, which was wound into a form completely circular; to intimate its continual revolution. They likewise expressed it by a serpent creeping along, because it glides and steals away imperceptibly. Did we pay due attention to its tacit admonitions as it leaves us, what a source of instruction should we find it! Memorable is the saying of the two celebrated Grecian sages*, "Time is the wisest

* Thales and Simonides.

S E R M O N IV. 95

of all things." The propriety and aptitude of this sententious apophthegm we must allow, when we consider that Time is the universal teacher, mankind are indebted to it for all their knowledge. And what a far greater than either of these, an inspired writer *, has said of Wisdom, is applicable to Time : *It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls : for the price of it is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it.* The moments which often appear to us so inconsiderable and trivial, when once gone, are irrecoverable : not all the gems which sparkle in Peruvian mines, nor all the gold of either India, could redeem one of them. Nor is our inability to retrieve the time past the only evil : the future is all precarious ; not the most profound sagacity, nor the most consummate integrity, can insure us a single moment of it. The time present takes its flight before we can call it our

* Job.

own.

own. Rouse then, ye thoughtless and supine, out of your unseasonable lethargy; resist and expel that fatal infatuation which has taken possession of your souls. Prize this invaluable jewel as you ought; ere it be snatched from you for ever. Why weary yourselves in the search of expedients to accelerate the course of those moments which are already but too rapid?

On Time, not only our best and most important interests, but even our All is suspended. How swiftly is it hurrying us upon its wings beyond the limits of this mortal state, into that unknown interminable region from which there is no possibility of returning!

The inconsistency of mankind in regard to the estimation of their time deserves attention. How palpably absurd is their conduct! They frequently blame heaven for circumscribing their duration within such scanty limits; and yet that duration, short as it is, often becomes tiresome, and hangs
2 heavy.

S E R M O N IV. 97

heavy. A prey to lassitude, languor, and disgust, they complain of a vacuity in life which no amusement can fill up. In prospect, hours seem years. But the retrospect is quite the reverse; years, after they are elapsed, appear but hours. Such is the delusive mist which overcasts and blinds their understanding, so strangely erroneous are their optics. They fancy that Time, as it approaches towards them, lingers; and feebly creeps along; but, as soon as past, not the lightning seems to fly with a more nimble and rapid glance.

Eternal Spirit; fountain of light and truth, dispel the thick cloud that hovers over our benighted souls, and irradiate it with thy celestial beams. *So teach us to number our days, and appretiate their worth, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Give us to see the necessity of this conduct, and impress our minds with a proper sense of the fatal consequences attending the neglect of it.

H

What

98 S E R M O N IV.

What happiness awaits the man who properly weighs his moments, whose hope amidst all his occupations is full of immortality ! He triumphs in the past, enjoys the present, and anticipates futurity with rapture. All placid, chearful, and serene, he meets whatever his destiny prepares for him ; no contingency, how sudden or disagreeable soever, can take him by surprize, or interrupt that blisful tenour of equanimity which is his peculiar characteristic. Is he surrounded with troubles and afflictions ? Then with what transcendent lustre does his virtue shine through the cloudy gloom which envelops it ! How ample a scope is here for his submissive meekness, and resignation ! To adopt the beautiful language of scripture, we may compare him *to the morning star in the midst of a cloud and to the moon at the full ; to the flower of roses in the spring of the year, to lilies by the rivers of waters, to the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, and to the sun shining upon the temple of the Most-High.*

Now

S E R M O N IV. 99

How enviable a condition is this, not only to be not affected with the little accidents of life, but also to be perfectly composed and serene amidst its greater evils, and even to smile with superior magnanimity at the malignant impotence of fate ! Would we attain to so exalted a state of mind, let every moment as it flies be arrested as it were, and marked down to useful purposes. Let piety and morality go hand in hand, joined in indissoluble union ; for without the support of the former, the latter, mere morality alone, will and necessarily must, whatever the arrogance of the atheistical skeptic may advance to the contrary, fall to the ground. He may talk of the inherent charms of virtue, and declaim upon the dignity of loving it for its own sake alone, independently of any view of a future recompense ; but experience proves that this is the reasoning of an extravagant visionary, an affectation of excellence as chimerical as it is supercilious, in short, absurdity itself. But to wave any further remarks upon the palpable futility of his arguments,——in direct opposition

11
100 S E R M O N IV.

to him, let our prayers, together with our charitable deeds, ascend in grateful memorial before the Most-High. Nor must we forget at the same time, that as charity, disjoined from piety, is unprofitable and ineffectual, so piety without charity will be of no avail. They are mutually necessary for the completion of each other. Devotion, if genuine and unfeigned, while it diffuses over the bosom an emanation of seraphic transport, and gives us a foretaste of the joys of heaven, shall incite us to actions of philanthropy and benevolence. This is the grand criterion by which the true may be distinguished from counterfeit, the dedication of ourselves to the godlike employment of doing good. Where this amiable propensity is absent, the spirit of devotion cannot dwell; because the former is the inseparable concomitant of the latter, it flows from it as from its native fountain. Our prayers are, in reality, nothing more than an idle transient effusion, not of the heart, but of the lips, unless we also communicate blessings to others with diffusive hand as far as in us lies. To sym-

pathize

S E R M O N IV. 101

pathize with the mourner, and pour the lenient balm of consolation into his bleeding heart; to befriend the helpless orphan, and turn the injured widow's tears to rapture; to patronize the unfortunate, and administer the cordial of relief to the bed of languishment and sickness; these are actions which the recording angel with pleasure minutes down in his awful register, and which will be fully displayed in the view both of men and angels, to our immortal honour and joy, on that eventful day when the sound of the seventh cherubic trump shall rouse the sleeping dead, and summon the trembling universe before the divine tribunal; when the eternal Judge shall descend, pavilioned in approachless light, attended with ten thousand times ten thousand dazzling Seraphim and Cherubim, tuning on their harps symphonies of melody inexpressible, in innumerable myriads composing his awful retinue! scene of splendor and magnificence, compared with which, our sun, and the united blaze of all the radiant orbs

102 S E R M O N IV.

which glow in yonder blue expanse, were darkness!

How exquisitely pleasing to hear the benediction of the poor man, who was ready to perish, descending on our heads; flowing as it were in a torrent of gratitude from his lips, for having received from our hands that relief which we, without the smallest inconvenience to ourselves, were enabled to impart. Nor shall this benediction be lost. No: harmonizing with the melodious hymns of angels, and winged with devout sincerity, it shall rise to heights ineffably sublime, win its passage into the Heaven of heavens, and call down upon us ten thousand blessings from the Throne of light!

More particularly at those times when we are to commemorate a dying Saviour's love (as at the present) by the participation of those sacred mysteries which he has instituted as pledges of his benignity towards a fallen race, and constant memorials

S E R M O N IV. 103

of his death, to our inexpressible consolation and joy; when we are to perform those celestial rites which Himself taught us, and which he has enjoined his followers without exception to attend, if they would attest their affection for their crucified Lord;—yes, more particularly at those solemn seasons should we study to emulate that divine example of compassion and philanthropy left us by Him, who, while on earth, spent his whole life in doing good, and at last even died for our sakes, when he, as man, could do no more! This indeed was unparalleled and stupendous love!

Shall not this consideration leave that profound impression on our hearts which it ought to leave, and stimulate us to vie with each other in offices of amity, benevolence, and humanity? For which purpose, let us take a view of this grand circumstance with that attention which it so pre-eminently deserves.

104 S E R M O N IV.

When He who sits upon the throne of Heaven, inshrined in glory inexpressible, the almighty Father, by his unbounded prescience foreseeing the fall of man, spoke to the angelic multitudes in words to this effect,

*He with his whole posterity must die;
Die he, or justice must; unless for him
Some other able, and as willing pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.
Say, heavenly powers, where shall we find
such love.
Which of you will be mortal to redeem
Man's mortal crime, and just th' unjust to
save?*

When this solemn question was made, did any of those innumerable hosts, who stood around his throne, reply? No, not one.

** All the heavenly choir stood mute,
And silence was in heaven:*

An

* The inexpressible sublimity of this, together with the preceding passage, will, I hope, be deemed a sufficient

S E R M O N IV. 105

An awful silence! expressive at once of the deepest perplexity, and consternation! Not one of them stepped forth as an intercessor for wretched man, much less then would any of them incur so severe a penalty. The forfeiture was great; the relinquishment of a life of endless bliss in heaven, for misery and death on earth! Thus did this august interrogation occasion a pause in the bliss of angels, till the express image of his glory, his only Son, stepped forth, and offered to resign that beatitude immense past utterance and even beyond conception, in which he sat imbosomed by his great Father's side,—to resign it for man, assume his nature, and expiate his offence with his own death. This was compassion carried to its divinest height!

sufficient apology for their introduction; since it is impossible to read them attentively without being impressed with the most devout and elevated sentiments. They are taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book III.

What

106 S E R M O N IV.

What can the glowing soul of Devotion imagine here, but that all heaven was totally absorbed for a while in silent admiration, then suddenly burst forth into melodious hymns of extasy and praise! Triumphant Halleluiahs and unusual jubilee filled all the celestial regions. Worthy art thou (they sung) to receive glory and power; dominion and praise be to Thee for ever and ever!

Yes! he descended from the empyrean heights, the mansions of everlasting day, to dwell in these low darksome abodes of mortality. He voluntarily abdicated that felicity which he had enjoyed innumerable ages before the sun, before the heavens existed, to become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And surely that appellation, none ever deserved so justly as himself. He was indeed a man of sorrows in the most emphatic sense: yet not one complaining accent or reproachful murmur ever escaped his lips. While the birds of the air had their nests, and the beasts of the earth their receptacles for shelter, the Lord
of

S E R M O N IV. 107

of the universe had not where to lay his head. Though he experienced nothing but ignominy, contempt, and injury, was not only stigmatized with the most opprobrious epithets, but also constantly assailed with brutal persecutions, yet was his life one continued miracle of love. He was too gentle and benevolent to seek revenge on his inhuman foes, and retaliate wrong with wrong. He repaid their maledictions with blessings. Repulsed like some execrable culprit from the inhospitable doors of affluence and grandeur, he went about from city to city, from province to province, doing good.

But in particular attend him in the last stage of his life, follow him to Calvary. On this trying and mournful theatre what patience did he display! What admirable meekness and stupendous composure appear in his whole deportment! How precisely does he verify the prophet's prediction! He is led, indeed, *as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,*

108 S E R M O N IV.

dumb, so he opens not his mouth. He seems to be perfectly inattentive to himself, and to regard only those among the concourse of spectators, who, touched with pity and horror at sight of the barbarous insults which he experiences, cannot refrain from shedding the sympathizing tear, and deploring his unhappy doom. If sadness and grief cloud the serenity of his countenance, 'tis at the thought of the woes and ruin impending over their heads, and not in consequence of his own sufferings. Turning about, he looks upon them with that same benign and compassionate eye which lately melted into tears over their ungrateful city. *Weep not for me* (he thus addresses them), *but weep for yourselves, and for your children.* And now behold him suspended on the fatal tree, as a flagrant malefactor, between two atrocious criminals. See those hands, which should have wielded the sceptre of the universe, painfully extended, cruelly mangled and torn! those guiltless hands, which have been so often stretched out in offices of compassion and love! those eyes which have so frequently

S E R M O N IV. 109

frequently looked pity and forgiveness to the heart of the weeping penitent, encouraged the timid, and revived the desponding soul, now pallid, dim, and swimming in death! those sacred temples which in the heaven of heavens were inwreathed with a diadem of light so insufferably glorious that even archangels turned away from the blaze, now dishonoured with a mimic crown of thorns, which deeply pierce into his bleeding flesh! See how his face is stained with the purple flood, which streaming down mingles with the sanguine torrents that gush from almost every pore of his tortured body! What anguish! what excruciating pangs! intense and severe beyond all conception! How does he behave in this dreadfully agonizing extremity? Is he still composed, benevolent, and serene? Does he not resent this contumelious, this superlatively opprobrious treatment? Is this the reception which mortals give the illustrious Son of the Most-High, the mighty heir of heaven! Does he not shower down imprecations on the heads of the insulting and cruel soldiery,

THE SERMON IV.

foldiery, who, all tormented with thirst as he is, and exhausted with agonies, present him nothing but vinegar to drink? Does he not implore his almighty Father to hurl his vindictive thunders forth, and crush his daring enemies; to send down ten thousand legions of avenging angels, and consume a guilty world? No; his conduct is perfectly the reverse of this: he lifts up his fainting eyes to heaven, which are just ready to close in death, and says in the most moving and pathetic accent, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Is it possible to contemplate this behaviour without the profoundest admiration! Could philanthropy soar to a sublimer height? Go then, and imitate the incarnate, the expiring God. Be what he once was, here on earth,—tender-hearted, forgiving, humane. Be what he now is, in heaven, who, though supreme at the right hand of bliss and glory, is clemency itself, and, mingling his gracious intercession with our prayers, presents them to his great Father.

Let

S E R M O N IV. 111

Let us commiserate the unfortunate, condole with the distressed, and alleviate at least their sorrows. Let the soothing dictates of sympathy never be disregarded. This, in constant union with a proper sense of our dependence on the Greatest of Beings, shall illumine the sable cloud of life with an Iris whose radiance shall never fade; or (to speak without a metaphor) it shall make the heart expand with conscious complacency and joy in the midst of affliction. This is a disposition congenial with the soul, originally impressed upon it, interwoven in its very texture by its heavenly Author; which both his own word and the voice of nature injoin us to cultivate and cherish: and consequently, if the soul indulges it without restraint, it cannot but be happy. Thus indulged, it shall render the most pleasing situation in life infinitely more pleasing. Whether acting in the capacity of parent, or child, or friend, it shall diffuse superior and permanent charms over each of these connections. Mingling with the tide of parental affection, it shall overwhelm the heart as it were with

a tor-

112 S E R M O N IV:

a torrent of exquisite delight, while it swells the filial bosom with rapture. It shall heighten connubial bliss, impart additional lustre to the bridal lamp, and give it to burn with uniform and undecaying splendor, when the attractions of beauty are no more. But (what is above all the rest) it shall qualify us for a state of far superior happiness when the last angelic Trump shall blow, when joys terrestrial shall vanish away like a morning cloud, and Time shall be no more!

Read Nov 18

S E R-

S E R M O N V.

DANIEL vi. 16.

*Thy God whom thou serveſt continually, he
will deliver thee.*

THIS was the conſolatory ſpeech of the Median Monarch Darius to the Prophet Daniel, on being compelled by the princes and preſidents of his kingdom, to inflict upon him the puniſhment annexed to the violation of the royal edict; which prohibited the preferring a petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to the king, on the penalty of being caſt into the den of lions. This decree their inſidious

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114 S E R M O N V.

importunity had extorted from their sovereign, and prevailed upon him to ratify with the imperial signet, merely with the malicious view of accomplishing the destruction of Daniel, on whom he lavished favours to which they thought themselves better entitled, and whom he cherished with a peculiar degree of indulgence. He was already exalted far above them, and the king had formed a project of raising him to a still higher pitch of dignity, by giving him the superintendence of the whole realm. This new accession of honour they could not bear, and resolved to prevent it by injurious and malignant insinuations with regard to his conduct in the administration of public affairs, as one of the three who presided over the kingdom: for which purpose they scrutinized his actions, with all the severity of exasperated rancour, but in vain; no cause for impeachment was found; his fidelity was irreproachable, and his integrity without stain. The only resource therefore which now remained, was his constant and invariable adherence to his God. . They accordingly

cordingly adopted the treacherous expedient above mentioned, for they foresaw that his steady perseverance in his own mode of worship would render him obnoxious to the inhuman punishment which they proposed. Their stratagem succeeded but too well: Daniel was found by these invidious confederates addressing his supplications to the God of his fathers, as usual. They presently informed the king of this circumstance, and solicited the immediate execution of his edict. The sorrowful monarch, after a long and fruitless aim at some expedient for the deliverance of his favourite, unable to infringe a statute which himself had so firmly established, complied with the utmost reluctance. But before he consigned him over to the punishment which they pretended was due to him, he addressed him in the memorable words above, expressive at once of his affection for the injured Hebrew, and of his confidence in that sovereign Power whom he adored. Nor did the event falsify this encouraging assurance of the king; for Daniel, although cast into

the den of lions, escaped unhurt: these ferocious animals, awed by a superiour impulse, checked by a divine energy, forgot, as it were, their natural propensity to blood, and refused to open their voracious mouths upon him. In the mean time, the Chaldean monarch abandoned himself to the most profound affliction. The Sacred History informs us, that he passed the night fasting, and forbade the instruments of musick, his usual recreation, to be brought before him. Unintermitting grief having banished sleep from his eyes, he arose very early in the morning, and repaired with all possible expedition to the cavern; when, on calling out upon this faithful adherent to the living God in a lamentable accent, he heard him answer to his voice, and beheld him restored in perfect safety. Fully convinced of his integrity by his miraculous preservation, and exasperated at the malevolence of his accusers, he without mercy transferred upon themselves that disastrous doom which they had so unjustly inflicted on Daniel: and the same ravenous beasts, which

which had been withheld by a supernatural power from injuring him, rushed upon them with the most impetuous fury, and devoured them in an instant.

Hence this lesson is plainly deducible, that we ought never to despond, never to think ourselves removed from the reach of an omnipotent and ever-wakeful Providence, however calamitous and distressful our situation be, how deep soever be the abyss into which we are fallen. Let us look up for support and protection in the midst of danger to that great Being, who alone can give it. Is he a God at hand, and not a God afar off? His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, which can hide us from the reviving influences of his love. Encouraged as we are by his own assurance, that he will never leave us nor forsake us, if, ever studious to obtain his favour, we repose an absolute and undivided confidence on his goodness, let us draw near to him with humble hope and

118 S E R M O N V.

holy joy; and he, anxious to succour and to
 bless, will in return draw near to us. When
 we look around us, and contemplate the
 various dangers and vicissitudes to which
 we are exposed in this probationary state;
 when we reflect that, like ravenous animals
 in continual search of prey, misfortunes lurk
 around, from which neither the most vigi-
 lant caution can defend, nor the most unble-
 mished virtue save; we must be convinced
 that it is of the highest importance to se-
 cure an interest in the favour of the Al-
 mighty, and that, without it, our situation
 must be truly forlorn and miserable. The
 soul of man, although of divine original,
 being an emanation of the Deity himself,
 on a multiplicity of occasions finds itself
 in a most disconsolate and abandoned state.
 Nor is it difficult to account for this. Re-
 lying on the creature instead of the Creator,
 confining its hopes to an object which was
 never designed to engross them, and
 whence it can never derive support in the
 season of distress, is it a matter of wonder
 if, when that season arrives, it sinks helpless
 and

S E R M O N V. 119

and despairing to the dust? A traveller wandering all the night in the midst of a dreary and pathless desert without light and without conductor; a prisoner pining without resource in a cold inhospitable dungeon; an emaciated wretch stretched on the bed of sickness without a friend to relieve or sympathise, destitute of assistance and comfort; a putrid corse extended on the ground, unlamented, unburied, and unknown, deprived of the slender privilege of being covered with a little dust, and sprinkled with a few tender and condoling tears; these are the proper representations of the human soul, when it disunites itself from God, and adheres to terrestrial toys. Then may it justly say, with friendless Job, Strangers persecute me, my domestics fly far from me, my brethren no longer know me, I cannot find a single comforter; he, who once seemed the most faithful, now regards me only with horror and aversion. Reduced to so lamentable a condition, when the storm of affliction begins to discharge its fury, it finds itself unable to stem the tor-

120 S E R M O N V.

rent, and looking around in vain for some slender reed on which it may lay hold, and find a momentary rest during the commotions of the beating billows, it is borne down by the stream with irresistible violence; and lost.

Trust then in the Most-High with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. In the whole course of thy conduct have His approbation only in view; look upon all but Him as unworthy of thy confidence; and in the hour of adversity and danger thou shalt not be dismayed; in spite of every pressure which the rigour of fortune lays upon it, thy heart shall rise with redoubled strength and vigour. Far better is it to rely on Him than to put any confidence in so frail a being as man: if thou makest the latter only the object of thy trust, thou wilt find too late that thou hast all the while been leaning on a broken reed, which will pierce thee in the end, and occasion the most excruciating

S E R M O N V. 121

cruciating sensations. He frequently wants ability to redress thy grievances ; his power, as well as his duration, is circumscribed within narrow bounds; and even where he has ability, he will, it is probable, want inclination. But, in the former, nothing of this nature is to be apprehended: as he can never want ability, so neither does he want inclination to help and patronize those who serve him with fidelity. His power and his goodness are, like his duration, unlimited and eternal. *Is my hand, says he, shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea; I make the rivers a wilderness, and cloathe the heavens with blackness.* Fear not what the utmost rage of man can inflict upon thee. *I, even I, am he that comforteth thee:* why shouldest thou be afraid of a frail perishable being like thyself, when that Almighty Hand, which stretched forth the heavens, sustains and protects thee?

Such

Such are his expostulations with the timid and desponding soul; such are his promises of support to those who, with ardent desire and incessant assiduity, endeavour to render themselves, as far as the imperfection of their nature will allow, worthy of his patronage and protection. He here opens before us an asylum, a place of never-failing refuge, into which we may retreat, when assailed by calamity, where we may repose in perfect safety, heedless of the storm that rages without. Malice may call forth all its efforts in order to accomplish our destruction; but he only permits it to exert its fury so far as is consistent with the great designs he has in view, and says to it as to the tumultuous ocean, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. Our foes may make use of open violence or secret stratagem, and conspire with the powers of darkness themselves to effect our downfall; but he that sitteth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Most-High shall have them in derision. He shall frustrate all their machinations,

S E R M O N V. 123

chinations, and crown their heads with shame. Under the shadow of his wings shall be our refuge until their tyranny be overpast. In Jehovah is the plenitude of power and everlasting strength: confide therefore in Him for ever. He who raised Lazarus from the grave, after having been four days dead; who restored the widow's son to life and to his weeping parents' arms; who rescued multitudes languishing on the bed of death from the gloomy tyrant's power, and wrought so many mighty miracles of love; who preserved the three Hebrews unhurt in the burning furnace, and by an exertion of power, equally wonderful, delivered his servant Daniel from the lion's den; He who did all this, cannot surely be deficient in ability to extricate any, who implore his assistance, out of their distresses, and is entitled to their unbounded reliance. Yes, the Almighty is the shepherd of the ~~good~~; ^{none are good but God} he is acquainted with all their necessities before they ask, and will supply them in his own appointed time. In their journey through this howling wilderness, he will send

124 S E R M O N V.

send his angel before them, and his tutelary providence shall ever watch over them. He will be to them as it were a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night; an enemy to their enemies, and a friend to all who exercise kindness towards them. Even though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet ought they to fear no evil, for he shall be with them, his protecting rod and staff shall sustain and comfort them.

How eminently was this beneficent vigilance and interposition of the Most-High exemplified in the case of the prophet Elijah, when he rescued him from the fury of Ahab, king of Israel, and hid him by the brook Cherith. In this sequestered and solitary spot a flight of ravens, impelled by a supernatural instinct, brought him a constant supply of necessary food both morning and evening. Thus were the very fowls of the air rendered subservient to the interest and wants of this faithful missionary of God. But the history of his successor Elisha pre-
sents

S E R M O N V. 125

sents us with an instance, if possible, still worthier of our attention. The city wherein he was, being surrounded with horses and chariots, and a great army by the Syrian monarch, in order to seize his person, and his servant in the utmost consternation observing to him their perilous and distressful condition, with what magnanimity and pious composure did he reply, Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them. After which, he intreated his God to open the eyes of his servant, that is, to disperse the gross film of mortality which intercepted his sight, and prevented him from seeing the glittering myriads of immaterial and spiritual beings, which encompassed them as their guardians and defenders. The request was immediately granted, his eyes were accordingly opened, and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha. A prayer being then offered up by the prophet, the whole army was smitten

smitten with blindness, and consequently incapacitated for doing him any injury.

What a fund of consolation ought virtuous poverty and persecuted innocence to derive from the thought, that no obscurity of station, and no place which assiduous cruelty can search out to immure its victim, not even the profoundest abysses of the earth or of the ocean, are sufficient to exclude them one moment from his view! With what patience, and undaunted fortitude, should this inspire them, in the midst of all their misfortunes and trials! They cannot often enough revolve in mind, that He, who, though exalted above the heavens, is condescension and clemency itself, beholds with peculiar attention every tear that falls from the eyes of the indigent and humble in heart, and listens with pleasure to every sigh which they send up to heaven; and that the remotest corner of the universe lies equally open to his survey with that part which appears to us the nearest to his throne. For want of the steady support which the proper
con-

S E R M O N V. 127

consideration of this truth cannot fail to communicate, how many have been forced aside, by the shock of adversity, from that path which it was not only their eternal, but their temporal, interest to pursue!

But they, who indulge the hope of experiencing the assistance of their God in the hour of danger, must be solicitous to conciliate his favour in the hour of safety, and to attach themselves to his laws with becoming regard and veneration; they must beware of every thing which may militate against their duty towards him, and tend in the smallest degree to alienate his affections from them: with this view they ought fervently to implore the assistance of that Power, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, and who alone can keep them from falling; and to bear this excellent advice of the Psalmist indelibly impressed upon their minds, Keep innocency, and do the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last. How remarkable for piety was the conduct of holy Job
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in his prosperity! nor did he fail to reap abundantly the advantages of it when the season of adversity arrived. Notwithstanding the depredation of all his property, and the far heavier and more afflicting loss of his children; notwithstanding the injuries of the rapacious Sabeans, and Chaldean bands, and the terrible inflictions of heaven; his confidence in his God continued unshaken, and he still retained that peace of mind which only conscious virtue can impart: he still persevered with undeviating uniformity in that course of piety, which he had been so studious to pursue in better and more fortunate days. *Till I die, says he, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* And how admirable a degree of devout acquiescence in the decrees of the Almighty is expressed in these words! *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He also shall be my salvation.* Let the sufferer have recourse to the instructions of this most patient yet most afflicted of men, and learn

S E R M O N V. 129

of him to bear calamity with becoming magnanimity, hope, and resignation. The Almighty shall deliver thee (says he) in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in his season.

David in his own behaviour presents us with another instance of that internal tranquillity and composure which a consummate trust in heaven can confer in the midst of troubles and distresses. The consciousness of his own rectitude, and of the Divine approbation, was sufficient to support him in the trying hour, and to dart a ray of consolation across the darkest gloom of affliction. If at any time frail humanity seemed ready to sink beneath the burden of woe, Reli-

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130 S E R M O N V.

gion interposed in a moment, and dispelled each uneasy thought. Convinced that there was no room for dejection, or distrust of the Divine Goodness, how piously does he reprove it, how resolutely oppose and check its progress! *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

Happy the man, who by frequent reflections on the world's insufficiency to procure any lasting or real satisfaction, is enabled to rise above it, and to make his God alone the object of his hope! How pleasing the view of his situation! Lovely indeed is the picture which it exhibits. He resembles a tree planted by the waters, which spreadeth out its roots by the rivers, untarnished and uninjured by the heat, whose leaf is ever flourishing and green, whose beauty the drought never impairs, and whose branches are always full of fruit. That Great Being, whose eye is ever on the watch to discover
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S E R M O N V. 131

those who are worthy of his care, keeps him, amidst those occurrences which so greatly perplex and ruffle the dependant on the world's succour, in perfect peace, because his mind is stayed on heaven, and from that quarter alone looks for protection. Does he pine under the chilling blast of want and penury? Does the world disdain to turn its eye upon him, or, if it ever condescends to behold him, is it only with a scornful eye? These are circumstances so far from doing him any prejudice in the estimation of his Maker, that they are, on the contrary, great recommendations in his sight. Those who are humble and depressed in heart as in circumstances, and solicit his aid with a zealous sincerity, he never neglects to uphold and countenance, but distinguishes with conspicuous and unquestionable marks of his approbation.

Let us in like manner ardently endeavour to obtain his favour and support. Destitute and feeble as we are by nature, exposed to unforeseen and inevitable evils; Reason itself

132 S E R M O N V.

admonishes us to transfer our confidence from those objects which are incapable of administering the assistance our situations often require, to that Almighty Being, who can effectually relieve us. Placing our sole dependance on our Maker, we shall not only enjoy the sweets of happy tranquillity, and remain unmoved amidst the tumults and perturbations of the multitude which surrounds us, but also be perfectly undaunted and serene when any alarming conjuncture happens, when public or when private danger threatens us. At this eventful crisis, when we stand most in need of the succour and interposition of heaven, we shall experience it most; we shall feel something within our minds, confirming our resolutions, and infusing an unusual degree of fortitude and boldness. We shall hear this indulgent voice whispering perpetual comforts to our hearts: Be not dismayed nor confounded; thy God whom thou serveest continually, he will deliver thee. He is thy shield and buckler; he will spread over thee the shelter of his almighty wings,

S E R M O N V. 133

and his everlasting love shall be thy guard. If he be for thee, who or what can be against thee? Those who attach themselves to his service with inflexible fidelity, he will not fail to befriend and deliver in the trying hour: or, if this is not consistent with the wise plan which he has in view, if he does not think proper to recompense their pious constancy and zeal in this world, he will crown it with a reward in the next, which shall be great in proportion to the difficulties and hardships they have encountered here. Of this the three Hebrews were perfectly sensible when they were on the point of being cast into the burning fiery furnace, in consequence of their refusal to comply with the arbitrary and tyrannical command which they had received, to fall down and adore the golden image which was set up in the plain of Dura. How spirited and noble was their reply to the Chaldean monarch! how expressive of sovereign contempt for his furious menaces, and of absolute confidence in their God! Uttered in

134 S E R M O N V.

the most peremptory strain, it plainly, though tacitly, indicated a firm persuasion that, if the Power whom they served did not rescue them in the present world, he would compensate their sufferings with infinite felicity in a future one. Our God whom we serve (said they) is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. This positive and resolute defiance of the king's injunction exasperated him in an uncommon degree; his countenance was full of fury, and he ordered the furnace to be made seven times hotter than usual. They were then bound in their own garments and cast into the midst of the outrageous flames. But, O vain-glorious and relentless monarch, what was thy amazement when (miraculous event!), instead of being consumed, thou beheldest them on their knees unterrified, uninjured, offering up their devotions in the
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midst of the fire to the God whom they had always adored ! How impotent didst thou appear to thyself ! Where was then that imperious interrogation of thine, *who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands ?* It was changed into this exclamation, the dictates of astonishment, reverence, and awe: *Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like * the son of God.* Thus did the Most-High by a

* From the use of the definite article (the) in this place it might naturally be imagined that Nebuchadnezzar could allude to none but Jesus Christ ; which could not possibly be the case, he being grossly addicted to idolatry, as sufficiently appears from the beginning of the third chapter of Daniel, and therefore the existence of this divine personage could make no part of his creed. Besides, the Hebrew language has no definite article, unless the letter, ה may be sometimes deemed as such, which however is not inserted in this passage. Hence it evidently appears, in my opinion, that דָּמָה לְבֶר-אֱלֹהִים, *similis filio Dei*, ought to be translated, like a son of God ; that is, like a being of a superior kind, transcendently majestic and awful in his air, possessed of supernatural excellence and perfection.

supernatural interposition espouse the cause of his injured servants, and suspend the operation of the rapacious flames in such a manner, that not even a single hair of their head was singed!

And will he make us his peculiar care? Will the most Supreme of Powers be also the most attentive and propitious? Yes, if we pay all that regard to his precepts which they so eminently deserve, and cultivate with the most vigilant assiduity those pious habits and affections which they are so singularly calculated to excite and confirm. Thus shall we take an infallible step to insure the divine protection. Thus walking under the auspices of heaven, we shall not be confounded in the day of peril or distress: our God whom we serve continually, he will defend and deliver us. However, if happily we should not experience this deliverance here, yet, provided we devoutly contemplate his sacred laws both day and night, and constantly uniting practice with theory, make Faith and heavenly Hope our associates

S E R M O N V. 137

ates, we shall arrive in the end, through the mediation of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, and the clemency of our Creator, to those ever blest abodes, where Faith shall vanish away in vision, and Hope be absorbed in endless enjoyment.

Read Nov 18th 1840

S E R M O N VI.

I. CORINTH. iii. 21, 22, 23.

All things are yours:

*Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the
world, or life, or death, or things present,
or things to come; all are yours;*

And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

THE Apostle here represents to the Corinthians the eminent advantages which they enjoyed above the heathen world: and what he addresses to them, the professor of Christianity, of whatever nation or rank in life he be, may with equal propriety apply to himself. These advantages, although there is a striking difference between

140 S E R M O N VI.

tween them, some of them (as is obvious) being infinitely superior to the others in point of value and magnitude, are all highly estimable, and well worthy of the Christian's boast. But some of them how immense and glorious! Things to come are all ours! and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's! The soul of the devout and pious man catches new ardour at the thought, and seems transported beyond itself on the wings of celestial extasy! it feels the utmost elevations of seraphic love! He cannot find language sufficiently glowing and animated to express his gratitude towards that Being, who has distinguished him with such invaluable privileges! The acknowledgements which the holy transports of his zeal force from his lips, energetic and fervent as they are, yet are in the highest degree inadequate to that profound sense which his heart entertains of the divine goodness. While he has these eminent distinctions to boast, he is so far from envying the monarch on his throne, in all the pride of regal pomp and dignity, that from the ex-
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S E R M O N VI. 141

alted sphere to which he is thus raised by the indulgence of heaven, he looks down upon him with pity, and would think the universe itself too dearly purchased by the exchange of those glorious hopes which constitute all his felicity.

Let us then, in order to impress our minds with a deeper sense of the benefits in which he glories, take a separate view of them, and, with a seriousness suited to the nature of the subject, consider our obligations to become wiser and better, and the necessity of an improvement in the practice of piety proportioned to the helps and instructions with which we are favoured.

Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, offer themselves first to our consideration: these three may be all included under one view, what is applicable to one of them belonging equally to the others, when beheld in the light in which they are placed by the Apostle. The history of St. Paul is so well known,

142 S E R M O N VI.

known, that it would be a sort of insult to an intelligent audience to say any thing on this head. His zealous attachment to Judaism, his miraculous conversion, and indefatigable industry in disseminating the glorious Truths of Christianity, are circumstances, of which the most illiterate can hardly be ignorant.

Apollos (as we are informed in the Acts of the Apostles) was a native of Alexandria, a man remarkable for his eloquence, and extremely conversant with the scriptures.

Cephas (as almost every one must know) is no other but St. Peter himself, the Hebrew word Cephas having precisely the same signification with the term Peter in the Greek Language, which means a rock; an allusion to that passage in St. Matthew's Gospel, where our Saviour tells this disciple that his name should be Peter, and that upon this rock he would build his church, and the gates of hell should not prevail
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against it. Now these three eminent personages all concurring in the most assiduous efforts for the propagation of the gospel; what we are to understand by their being ours, is this, that we have the peculiar advantage of their doctrine and instructions, to establish us in the path of duty, and finally conduct us from these troubled regions to the mansions of everlasting rest. To this great end let us be always attentive, and omit no action which in any measure conduces towards it, and has the most distant connection with it. Particularly in imitation of these illustrious characters, whose names are transmitted down in the sacred Pages with so much glory and applause, let it be our employ, to the utmost of our power, to diffuse abroad that holy Religion which we profess, and which is so creative of happiness where-ever it is found. By these means shall we give light to them who sit in darkness, dispell the shadow of death which hovers over their souls, and guide their feet into the way of Peace. What nobler task can mortals be engaged in,

in, than to inform the ignorant, set the wanderer right who has been misled by error, and snatch the deluded victim of folly from the gulf of wretchedness and ruin? These are offices which must be singularly pleasing to the humane and benevolent mind.

Having thus seen in what sense Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, are ours, we are next led to consider, how the world, and life, and death, and present things, are ours.

When we contemplate the life of man on earth, how discouraging and gloomy a scene presents itself! A thousand difficulties and disasters lie before us, which no skill can remove, and no prudence prevent. A thousand dangers rise around, which the utmost vigilance and caution cannot shun. So liable is the most prosperous state to disappointments and vexations, that we may justly say, with suffering Job of old, Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. But how peculiarly dark and dreary

S E R M O N VI. 145

dreary must have been the prospect before Religion disclosed her glories to human view, and directed it upwards to better and happier regions, where every tear shall be wiped away from every eye, where sorrow and sighing shall never dare approach, and pain and death shall be no more! To those who were immersed in pagan ignorance and darkness, all whose views of happiness were terminated by the present life, the afflictions incident to this mortal state must have appeared almost insupportable. Accordingly we find a celebrated Greek * poet lamenting the melancholy posture of human affairs, and the vanity of an existence which appeared to him without hope or design, in the most touching and pathetic manner. Alas! (says he) the flowers and verdure of the field after death revive, and flourish again for another year in all their former beauty: but man with all his boasted power and wisdom, helpless man, when once he dies, rests obscure and forgotten in the bosom of the earth, never

* Moschus.

more to rise, but doomed to a long and everlasting sleep. This, among many other instances which might be adduced from the Greek and Roman writers, may serve to shew how uncomfortable and forlorn an aspect the human condition wore before the glorious dawn of Revelation appeared: the cloud, which sat thick and heavy all around, was impenetrable to the feeble eye of Reason. But when this celestial day-star darted forth its reviving beams——when the Gospel was promulgated, the gloom was dissipated in a moment, the prospect brightened up into heavenly lustre, and all was chearfulness, serenity, and joy! the destination of man in this world was no longer mysterious and inexplicable; Life and Immortality, were completely brought to light; Heaven itself and its ineffable felicities were disclosed; never-fading Crowns of Glory were held forth as the reward of the good and virtuous after death, who had full assurance given them of shining like the brightness of the firmament,

S E R M O N VI. 147

mament, and like the stars for ever and ever, in the most exalted stations of eternal blifs!

With this transporting and glorious prospect before him, the Christian may call every thing here his own. Invited to a splendid distinction among the Sons of Light, and to a participation of immortal pleasures in the mansions of the Blest, can he be dazzled with the glare of earthly grandeur, or think the most illustrious mortal deserving of his envy? Alas! What is there here to satisfy the ever active and vast desires of an immortal spirit? It breaks with the utmost impatience through the narrow prison of Creation, and seeks those regions of sovereign excellence where the Almighty Original of perfection dwells, and where alone it shall find objects adequate to those boundless capacities of happiness in which it glories. He who confines his desires within the limits which Religion prescribes, by wanting none of the envied advantages of this world, may be

148 S E R M O N VI.

said to be master of them all, and to enjoy them in a manner far superior to that in which they are enjoyed by the real possessors. But should he be placed by Providence in flourishing and opulent circumstances, fortune lavishing her favors at his feet, and honour eagerly suing for his acceptance, he makes a proper estimate of these bounties of fate, which, if rightly used, may become important blessings, and greatly enlarge the sphere of his utility. He makes them subservient to the noblest of purposes, that of doing good, and only values them as instruments of affording relief to the necessitous, and of communicating that happiness to others which himself possesses in so eminent a degree. He looks up to heaven with gratitude for their enjoyment and continuance, and, should it be the will of heaven to deprive him of them, not only resigns them without despair or sorrow, but even without a repining sigh, and cries out with submissive reverence, Thy will be done. He did not centre his happiness in them; so far from riveting his affections.

S E R M O N VI. 149

affections upon them, he had prepared himself for relinquishing them, always regarding them as things whose possession was extremely precarious, and as incapable in themselves of affording any real felicity. Whatever he loses here, he knows that he has a better and a far more enduring substance laid up for him above, where all is stability and immortal joy; and therefore is still master of himself, and placed beyond the reach of worldly desire, amidst the most trying emergencies and severe privations; which are so far from subduing his resolutions of patience, that he will not even suffer them to disturb or discompose him.

And as the pious Christian has gained the victory over the world, and life, and present things, so does he equally triumph over death. His whole life had been but one continual preparation for his last hour, and therefore he meets it all placid and serene, and welcomes it as the messenger of eternal liberty and happiness. By often

150 S E R M O N VI.

meditating upon it in the hours of health, and familiarizing it to his imagination, he had disarmed the gloomy tyrant of his dart; and he sees him now advancing in that beauteous and angelic form in which he once appeared to the glorious train of saints and martyrs, who ran with extasy into his arms, as what was to afford them a refuge from the cruelty of their foes, and convey them to the regions of eternal felicity. The remembrance of a thousand good actions which he has performed towards the orphan, the friendless, and the distressed, rises before him, and sooths his soul with unutterable joy. All the terrors of futurity vanish. The prospect is bright and smiling. His mind is perfectly at ease; it disburdens itself of every concern, and casts all its solicitude about the relatives or friends whom he leaves behind, upon his God. He hears a voice divine whispering confidence to his soul, and exclaims with ineffable transport, I have fought the good fight, I have kept the Faith, I have finished my course. Henceforth there is laid up
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S E R M O N VI. 151

for me an everlasting Crown which I shall receive from the hands of my all-righteous Judge himself! O Death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Soon shall this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality, in the happy realms of Light, where faith shall be absorbed in certainty, and hope in endless joy! What is there in this terrifying phantom, Death, that the good man should fear? 'Tis sin alone, which creates its sting, and gives it a form of horror. Virtue can discover nothing in it alarming. And now, ye enticing blandishments of the world, ye gaudy trifles of a moment which deceive mankind, how poor and despicable do ye appear! What are crowns and sceptres, compared with that felicity which I am going to experience! I would not exchange my present condition for that of the most exalted potentate on earth. Ye tiresome vanities of life, adieu! Celestial joys break in upon me! The dazzling mansions of Paradise appear before me. A few short moments more, and I shall be removed from

these dark tempestuous climes to the blissful shores above, the seats of immortal life and pleasure, there in transports all divine to pass a whole Eternity!

How enviable must be the state of that man's mind, who, at so solemn a conjuncture, can utter ejaculations like these! How pleasing must be the retrospect of his past conduct! He finds no unrepented crime, no cause for self-reproach. This circumstance makes his sun go down in peace, and gilds the evening of his life with meridian lustre. He passes undaunted through the darksome vale of death, for the rod and staff of his great Shepherd support him. He joyfully commends his spirit into the hands of his almighty Father, humbly relying for acceptance on the merits of a merciful Redeemer, who by his death made a complete atonement for the sins of mankind. On this steadfast basis all his hopes are built, nor is it in the power of human

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S E R M O N VI. 153

human or infernal stratagems to shake them.

Delightful indeed is the view of life concluded in this manner. Not nature amidst all her magnificence can boast so noble a scene. Edifying, in an extraordinary degree, is the contemplation of such heroic and pious behaviour in the last pensive extremity: it detaches the thoughts from earthly objects, and lifts the soul to heaven. Let us then frequently indulge meditations like these; they will be attended with the happiest consequences,

Thus it appears that life and death are ours. But the Christian has a far nobler boast remaining yet behind: Things to come are also his; and he is Christ's; and Christ is God's. Here how glorious a scene opens upon us! The boundless joys of Eternity are ours! As soon as death has broken down the partition-wall of clay which now stands between us and the attainment of our hopes, we shall bid adieu to these

these darksome abodes of mortality, and spring upwards with full enlargement to the regions of immortal Light and Happiness. Hovering angels wait around the dying bed of the virtuous man, to catch his departing spirit, and waft it on their wings to the bosom of that great Being, at whose right hand dwells fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore! The Son of God himself has purchased at the price of his own blood, for the fallen race of man, such glories and possessions as neither mortal eye hath ever seen, nor mortal fancy in its boldest excursions ever been able to catch a glimpse of! He descended from the skies to expiate by a painful death upon the cross the guilt of a ruined world, to wash in the streams that flowed from his own agonizing wounds every stain away, and to qualify them for participating in the blissful inheritance of the Saints in Light. Thus, as the Apostle tells us, we are bought with a price; Jesus, the express Image of the Most High, the head of all principalities and powers, has made us his own. He is be-

S E R M O N VI. 155

come the Universal Redeemer; he hath reconciled us to his great Father, and though he is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, dwelling in Light inaccessible, yet he is not ashamed to call us his brethren! He who created the universe, and bows the heavens in his greatness, condescends to give us, frail, offending creatures, this tender appellation! Exalted as he now is, he is perpetually interceding for us with his Father, and, Himself, presenting our imperfect prayers before the Eternal Throne; which through his merits are accepted as a sacrifice well-pleasing and acceptable to God. We who were formerly afar off, strangers to the heavenly promises, are now by Redeeming Love brought near, and instead of being, as then, enveloped in darkness, are made the children of Light. He hath graciously obliterated the handwriting which was against us, and removing it out of the way, nailed it to the cross, that we might not be deterred by the view of

156 S E R M O N VI.

of our unworthiness from approaching to the Sanctuary of his Love.

Such are the signal advantages which we enjoy. Let us with becoming gratitude contemplate them, and let our actions correspond with the dignity of our situation and hopes. All things are ours, things present and to come, celestial and terrestrial : to how stupendous a height is man exalted by Redemption ! Is this the fallen miserable Being to whom the Judge of heaven and earth addressed these humiliating words in Paradise, Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return ! How changed ! how ennobled ! His mean original from dust is now contrasted indeed. Honoured as we are with an access to the Father, through the atonement of Jesus Christ ; no longer strangers and pilgrims, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and domestics of an heavenly Sovereign ; called from the servitude of sin into the glorious Liberty of the children of God ; let our proficiency in piety and virtue keep pace with this immense benignity

S E R M O N VI. 157

nity of Heaven: let us walk circumspectly, not as thoughtless and unwise, but as those whose hope is full of immortality. For as our opportunities are great, so will our improvement of them be expected to be proportionably great likewise. This our Saviour himself has expressly declared to his disciples in these memorable words: That servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. Let this assertion incite us to renounce all communion with the works of darkness, and to assimilate ourselves to the Divine Image by true and unblemished holiness, as far as in us lies; humbly imploring for this end the renewing influence of that Spirit, without whose succour the frailty of man cannot but fall. Thus shall we in life insure our Maker's approbation; and, when Death summons us
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158 S E R M O N VI.

away to the world of spirits, we shall appear before him with confidential and holy joy, reposing our trust on that sacred Name in which the Christian glories—that Name, which announces to a ruined world, Salvation, Heaven, and never-ending Felicity—the Name of Jesus, by which alone offending mortals can be saved. Nor will he disdain, at that eventful Crisis, to accept of our sincere obedience, to unite us to the angelic host, and to assign us a seat of Bliss near his Throne in common with the dazzling assembly above.

Read Nov 18th 1840

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S E R M O N VII.

SONG OF SOLOMAN ii. 10, 11, 12.

*My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise
up my love, my fair one, and come
away.*

*For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over
and gone.*

*The flowers appear on the earth, the time of
the singing of birds is come, and the voice
of the turtle is heard in our land.*

VARIOUS have been the conjectures of the learned in regard to this highly figurative and animated composition of Solomon. The occasion which gave birth to it seems to have been something more than that mutual ardor of affection entertained

160 S E R M O N VII.

entertained by the monarch of Israel and his queen. Accordingly ancient writers, both Jewish and Christian, concur in extending its meaning beyond the narrow limits of a literal explication, and consider it in a spiritual sense; to which the mystic descriptions, majestic yet simple allegories, and that spirit of sublimity which breathes in every part, seem naturally to lead. They look upon it as intended to represent that pure reciprocity of exalted love, and intimate union, subsisting between Christ and his spiritual spouse the Church, and the advantages resulting from this union. The passage above in particular may be regarded as beautifully prophetic of that total change and happy renovation which he accomplished in the condition of mankind by resigning his life for their sakes; a change no less great and wonderful than that which takes place in the natural world, when after the long, melancholy darkness of inclement skies, after the gloomy storms and horrors of winter, the smiling spring appears, all cloudless and serene, clothes the face

S E R M O N VII. 161

face of heaven with brightness, and warms the frozen earth with its genial and reviving influences.

In this congratulatory and pathetic address of the divine Redeemer to his Church, we cannot but be struck at the first view with that engaging character under which he is represented! In how pleasing a manner is the insufferable lustre of his awful majesty accommodated to the feeble view of humanity! How full of encouragement to the humble and timid mind, to contemplate the great Author of the universe in this amiable light! To the heart which is depressed to the earth with the fear of having sinned away all hopes of forgiveness and clemency, how superlatively delightful this consolatory call, *Arise, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone!* Arise, and aspire after that divine felicity which the mediation of thy Redeemer has placed within thy reach. Lo, the gloomy clouds which hung over thy moral state are entirely dissipated, the dan-

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ger which threatened thy eternal welfare is over, and the powers of darkness exercise their malevolence upon thee in vain. *The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard.* The long-expected season of grace arrives, and presages to the faithful a copious and transporting harvest after all their labours and difficulties. Heaven and Immortality appear before thee in full and enchanting prospect; angels tune their golden harps to strains of ineffable melody, and call thee to the skies; celestial day beaming every moment brighter and brighter all around thee.

Meadows cloathed in lively verdure, embellished with a profusion of odoriferous flowers, and filled with the harmony of birds, are a beautiful and expressive picture of that lightsome and chearful face which the state of human affairs immediately assumed, in consequence of the benevolent interposition of the Son of God in our behalf. From what a gulph of ruin and wretch-

S E R M O N VII. 163

wretchedness did we then emerge! To what an height of happiness and dignity did we then arise! Instead of being overwhelmed in darkness and the shadow of death, we were admitted to the view of immortal glories, and directed into the paths which lead to those blessed abodes where rivers of happiness flow around in boundless plenitude. What hymns of gratitude and praise are due to him who by expiating with his own inestimable blood our offences on the cross, thus dignified our nature! How shall we sufficiently celebrate his bounty for so surprising a transition from the lowest abyss of sadness and despondency to the loftiest pitch of joy and triumph, from inevitable death to everlasting life, from opprobrious servitude to the glorious liberty of the Sons of God! He has opened before us a passage from these dark and desolate mansions to the blissful regions of immortal day. If weary of folly, and sick of those insipid gratifications which the sensualist pursues

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with such avidity, we pour out the penitential sigh before him in sincerity, and ardently supplicate for the return of his love, he beholds our filial sorrows with an eye of relenting concern and paternal tenderness, writes our names in heaven as his own beloved children, and the future heirs of eternal felicity among the saints in light. We are no longer enveloped in darkness; those fatal mists of error and ignorance which once intercepted the view of mortals, and surrounded the world, as it were, with Egyptian night, disappear before the conquering splendors of the Sun of righteousness, and are absorbed and lost in the diffusive blaze of its superior light. That auspicious period is arrived, the Church is witness to that happy revolution of affairs, the prophetic view of which suggested this just and animated address so long before, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

Those

S E R M O N VII. 165

Those lively and natural images which the wisest of men has combined with so much propriety and energy in order to represent the preeminent advantages which we enjoy, though refreshing the fancy with the most lovely picture, and calculated to excite the most delightful ideas, yet are far from answering fully the end which he proposed. So great indeed, so immense are those advantages, that the boldest figures and most animated metaphors which the whole extent of human language can furnish, are insufficient to give us an adequate conception of it.

Let us then adore that inestimable love which the Father of mercies displayed in delivering up his only Son to the cross for the sake of fallen man. Let us adore the unexampled benignity and condescension of the Son, who willingly submitted to the most excruciating and ignominious torments to purchase for us those inexpressibly glorious advantages which constitute our highest boast and happiness. Not contented with

166 S E R M O N VII.

being *despised and rejected of men*, with becoming a *man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; how chearfully did he submit on our account to the most opprobrious and horrid death which the barbarity of his malicious adversaries could invent! What an instance of transcendent benevolence! The smallest acknowledgment that we can make in return, is to listen with delight to his gracious invitation, and to obey his call with the utmost expedition. To turn a deaf and callous ear, would surely argue the most atrocious ingratitude. Let us arise, and come away, committing ourselves to His guidance, who will infallibly conduct us to the attainment of beatitude, compared with which the felicity which our first parents lost in Paradise, great as it was, diminishes to nothing. To the heart which has felt the renewing influences of his love, and which by unintermitted application to the throne of grace is metamorphosed into the divine similitude, how delightful to hear the music of his voice, to sit down under the shadow which his

7

protecting

S E R M O N, VII. 167

protecting goodness so widely spreads around, and to taste with humble confidence the celestial fruits which he has dispensed with so liberal an hand for the refreshment of the weary, and the comfort of the afflicted soul! His call is not limited to a few; it extends indiscriminately to the whole race of mankind. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* But when we approach his altar to experience this holy rest, we must not presume on our own merits, but be deeply impressed with a due sense of our unworthiness, and throw ourselves without reserve into the arms of his clemency; for the high-minded and arrogant are his aversion: as he never fails to crush the ill-founded hopes of the presumptuous, so he takes a superlative delight in encouraging and supporting those who sink beneath the burden which the consciousness of their demerits inflicts upon them. He is represented in the sacred writings as listening with a peculiar degree of attention to the cries of the lowly and contrite

168 S E R M O N VII.

in heart. From the inexhaustible fountain of his clemency flows a balmy cordial, which never fails to give relief and heal the wounds which the recollection of past misdeeds has wrought within the soul. He discountenanceth the proud, and resisteth all their presumptuous attempts to set his power at defiance, but imparts liberal portions of his grace and assistance to the humble.

From this rich source should all, who are too apt to be overwhelmed with terror and despair at the view of their infirmities, derive hope and consolation. Assured as they are in his own inestimable word of his unbounded goodness, striking and incontrovertible as the numerous proofs are which it presents, that he beholds the returning prodigal with an eye of tenderness and pity, highly irrational must it be to suffer the humiliating remembrance of former offences so far to depress and terrify their minds as to prevent them from seeking the recovery of his love. Or if these
repeated

S E R M O N VII. 169

repeated assurances and proofs are insufficient to procure ease for the troubled spirit, let them turn back their view to that ever memorable instance of stupendous benevolence with which he closed his ministry on earth, and contemplate him suspended in agonies on the fatal tree. How moving and awful a scene! Who can paint it in all its mournful and affecting colours? All the powers of the most animated imagination are vastly inadequate to the task. The review of those acute and unparalleled sufferings which he underwent to rescue us from eternal pain, at the same time that it melts, shall communicate strength and consolation to the bleeding heart. There is nothing so happily calculated for healing the broken spirit, for removing its anxiety, and inspiring it with fortitude and vigour. What was his behaviour at this critical and tremendous conjuncture? Did he evince the smallest symptom of indignation against the race of mankind in general, though their sins had nailed him to the cross, or against that brutal crew in particular, who
were

170 S E R M O N VII.

were more immediately his persecutors? Did he give the weeping penitent any reason to conclude that his tears and humiliation would be rejected? Did not his goodness and compassion towards a fallen and miserable world shine out with the same unclouded lustre even to the last moment of his life? How strikingly amiable, how wonderfully replete with clemency, was his behaviour to the repenting malefactor who was suffering by his side the punishment due to his crimes! On evincing an unfeigned sorrow for his past misconduct, and expressing an ardent desire to be remembered by his dying Saviour as soon as he should come into his kingdom, he received from those divine lips this delightful assurance, *This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

These words should sound continually in the ears of the penitent and desponding sinner. If he implores with the same ardor and heart-felt contrition the same distinction and immense felicity, there is no room
for

S E R M O N VII. 171

for doubt that he also shall one day be with his Redeemer in Paradise.——Go then in fancy to the top of Calvary, the theatre, on which was exhibited the most tragical of scenes! Contemplate him (if thou canst bear the horrid survey) groaning under those inconceivable barbarities and torments which brought everlasting ease and happiness to thee. In devout prostration at the foot of his cross, adore the incarnate God, and mingle thy tears with those profuse and precious streams with which his wounds bedewed the agonizing tree; nor will he disregard that sacred sympathy which makes thee weep at the view of those tortures which the crimes of mankind have so severely inflicted upon him, and yet he so patiently bears for their sakes. On the contrary, he will afford thee the most endearing and delightful proofs of his mercy. On the cross is suspended together with him all our hope and confidence; his death is the certain earnest of eternal life to man. One touch from the cross, now rendered sacred by the blood

172 S E R M O N VII.

blood of thy dying Lord, is of sovereign efficacy to dispel those maladies which the sting of guilt has occasioned within thy soul, and to convert the dreary prospect which thy terrified imagination raises around thee, into a serene and lightfome Paradise: the film which obstructs thy intellectual view shall be removed, and thou shalt behold with divine extasy more than Paradise itself restored to thee. Justly therefore might the Apostle exclaim in this language of holy transport, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*

O Jesu, restorer of a fallen race who had forfeited heaven by their disobedience, shed the vivifying influence of thy divine spirit over our hearts, extirpate every degenerate principle, mould them into that perfect and heavenly frame which made the Apostle utter this pious exclamation; Grant us the same elevating views of those inestimable advantages procured by thy Passion;

S E R M O N VII. 173

that we may glory in nothing save thy cross, and that the world may be crucified to us, and we to the world. Draw us with the cords of thy love from this fascinating scene of vanity with which we are surrounded, and unite us to thyself. In spite of all our efforts, what an ascendancy has the world over our affections! how closely does it twine about our hearts! How difficult to resist its soft persuasions, and contemn its endearing allurements! But when thou callest, with what indifference and coldness do we hear! A thousand subtle evasions are ready, a thousand futile excuses to decline the gracious invitation. How exactly is our case described by the inspired Penman, who figuratively transfers it to the church: *it is the voice of my beloved, saying, open to me, my sister, my love; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.* Though she knew the gentle accents of his voice, yet how unkindly does she reply! how poor an apology for refusing her heavenly lover that shelter which he so pathetically implored!

plored! *I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* At length her heart upbraids her with her ungenerous remissness, and she is softened into tenderness by his moving sollicitation. She rose up to open to her beloved, and her hands dropped with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the lock, the precious remains of that fragrance which the touch of her Lord had left there. *I opened (says she) to my beloved, but he had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.* He was gone! Seize then the present opportunity, give him admission into thy heart while he is to be found. With what inward pangs and external inconveniences was this negligence and delay of hers attended! Hear her representing her unfortunate condition: *The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.* Oh, what infatuation does it argue to defer that momentous work on which our everlasting felicity is suspended!

S E R M O N VII. 175

pended! Ought procrastination to be found among those who cannot be sure of futurity, nor even of another moment? What is life? An airy vision, a gaudy meteor, which just sparkles, and then is seen no more.

History records that when the city of Syracuse was taken by storm, Archimedes was so intent on his studies that he did not hear the universal tumult which such a disaster must occasion, nor perceive the destruction which was pouring around him on every side. But how fatal was this abstraction of mind! for ere he was sensible of his danger, an inhuman soldier rushed upon him, and ended at once his speculations and his life. Thus is it with him who is inattentive to the grand concern which should occupy all his thoughts. Multitudes are daily and hourly falling around him, yet he neglects these awful warnings, and seems to think his condition immutable. In this manner he goes on, connecting pleasure with pleasure in uninterrupted series, and
dancing

176 S E R M O N VII.

dancing as it were upon the verge of a precipice, till death comes suddenly upon him, and with one irresistible blow hurls him down into the unfathomable abyss of eternity.

Can nothing soften my obdurate heart, and dissolve the charm which ties me down to the world? Nothing but thy assistance, O Son of God! who canst in a moment *turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.* The potent energy of thy grace can effectually rectify our perverse inclinations, and transform our callous natures into that relenting disposition, that devout sensibility, which melts in a moment at the fear of having offended. Render us susceptible of those divine impressions which are so necessary to the regulation of our affections, and without which we cannot be qualified for thy favour. Remove the film of mortality from our eyes, make us clearly perceive the numerous dangers impending over our heads, and

wean

S E R M O N VII. 177

wean our desires from earthly things to heaven.

Father (said the returning prodigal in the parable) *I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* O heavenly father! (ought we also to return and say) I have sinned before thee, I have forfeited thy clemency by my obstinate perseverance in that path which thou hast prohibited, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Dare I, a flagrant rebel, loaden with crimes and guilt, implore thy pardon! Ought not rather the phial of thy vengeance to discharge its flaming contents upon my execrable head? Do I not deserve to be hurled headlong by the thunders of thy wrath to the realms of endless woe? But though incensed justice calls aloud for my punishment, yet I hear the still small voice of mercy pleading in my behalf, and crying, "Forgive." Thou, O my Saviour, hast expiated my offences with thy own blood: though my stain be of the deepest dye, those sacred

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and purifying streams shall effectually wash it away. Thou actest as my advocate and intercessor with thy almighty Father, and through thy meritorious death alone can I hope for pardon. The burden of my sins is intolerable, and weighs me down to the dust! I abhor myself, and hardly dare to lift my supplicating eyes to thee for mercy.

Happy the soul which can say in the language of the spiritual bride, so expressive of her blissful though mystic union with her Lord, *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* What can interrupt the sacred tranquillity which it feels from a consciousness of this divine communion? No loss, nor affliction, nor any earthly accident whatever. With all the fervor of genuine devotion it exclaims, *My Redeemer and my God, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is nothing upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.* Fain would I emulate the lofty strains of archangels, fain would I catch a spark of that celestial flame which
glows

glows within their bosoms, to express the pious ardor of my affection for thee in words adapted to my feelings. As the thirsty hart pants for the refreshing springs, so do I gasp for that happy period when I shall see thee face to face, and gaze without controul on infinite excellence and uncreated Glory! *Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I fly away* from a place where I can find no enjoyment congenial with my immortal nature; then would I bid adieu to these regions of sorrow and death, and fly to Thee! How do I languish for the fruition of that superior felicity experienced by angels, and long to mingle with the white-robed multitudes who stand before the throne of God, waving their triumphant palms, in token of their victory over the world, through the power of the Lamb that was slain, and now liveth forever and ever! But as yet mortality forbids; I must patiently attend that hour when death shall release me from my fetters, and dismiss me to the skies.—The soul which indulges these holy and sublime

185 S E R M O N VII.

aspirations, enjoys a felicity which it would not exchange for the wealth of all the monarchs in the universe. The regal purple, the golden sceptre, and the gorgeous diadem, are trifles, which, if balanced with that infinitely superior treasure which it possesses within, would be found lighter than vanity itself, and spurned with contempt. Even here below it is privileged with a prelibation of that happiness which disembodied spirits enjoy above.

This sacred impatience for the fruition of divine perfection does the sincere penitent long to attain. O Thou (he cries), who knowest that we are but dust, commiserate my frailty, and enable me to rise superior to the wiles of my infernal enemy. Fain would I too elevate my affections to this seraphic height, anticipate with unintermitting extasy the bliss of heaven, and love nothing but Thee. Fain would I break asunder those ties which bind me to error and folly, but an innate propensity to ill restrains me. How applicable is the

S E R M O N VII. 181

impassioned complaint of the Apostle to myself! Or rather if he, who, by the assistance of the divine spirit, had subdued every habit and inclination which militated against his duty, complained in this manner, how much greater reason have I for lamenting my infirmity! *The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.* O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the dominion of those depraved desires which tyrannize over my soul! Who shall put a stop to the ravages and desolations which sin has multiplied in my nature? Hark! a voice replies, *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save!* From me expect and receive the support which thou implorest. *My grace is sufficient for thee.* O amiable, transporting sound! It came from the cross. Ah! there hangs all my succour, all my hope and strength! And is it possible! mysterious and adorable truth! the Son of God bleeding for an execrable

182 S E R M O N VII.

reptile, bleeding for the guiltiest of the guilty, even for me! Yes, from those gaping wounds streams a medicinal fountain, of wondrous efficacy to assuage the smarts of sin, and cure the maladies which it has introduced into the soul. Wounded for my transgressions, pouring out his soul in the agonies of a lingering and cruel death! My God! my God! and wast thou vilified, persecuted for me! Have my iniquities nailed thee to the cross! *Oh that my head were waters and my eyes fountains of tears, inexhaustible fountains, that I might deplore without any intermission the enormity of those iniquities!* Why does not my frozen stubborn heart flow through my eyes in never-ceasing torrents of grief, or burst asunder at once with the recollection of those bitter pangs which thou, O gracious Son of God, enduredst unrepining, unreluctant, for my sake!

Thus it is with all mankind. Even the best experience frequent instances of this infirmity in themselves. 'Tis congenial
with

S E R M O N VII. 183

with the human mind, 'tis interwoven in its very texture. When the soul, abstracted from every sublunary thought, and soaring aloft upon the eagle wings of contemplation, is ready to ascend as it were into the heaven of heavens, how suddenly does some trifling imagination intervene! mortality prevails, and drags it down again to earth. This is the unhappy consequence of the fall: nor will it be removed till death shall divest the spirit of its cumbrous terrestrial cloathing, and permit it to expatiate a pure, unconfined, and unbodied essence, in its native skies. If vanity and disobedience found entrance into heaven, and diffused their baneful influence over the bosoms of the blest, how just were the warning words of the angel who, flying through midheaven, cried in the ears of St John, *Woe to the inhabitants of the earth!* How can they hope to escape the pernicious contagion, and to shut up their hearts entirely against the approaches of levity and folly? If beings who were all purity and perfection, if angels fell, how can so frail

184 S E R M O N VII.

a creature as man, who is naturally prone to evil, stand secure amidst the numerous temptations to which he is exposed!

But although this total detachment of the soul from every temporal engagement be difficult, yet it may be effected; we may cultivate a perpetual acquaintance with the spiritual world, and enjoy unmolested communion with our God. Else why this gentle, yet powerful call, Arise, and come away? Wouldest Thou, O heavenly Father, Thou whose very essence is clemency and goodness, have required an impossibility at the hands of thy feeble, thy erring creatures? Ah, no. I cheerfully obey the propitious, the adorable summons. Like the venerable patriarch, I follow thy voice, not perfectly knowing whither I go, but in full confidence that thou canst not disappoint those ardent hopes and sublime expectations which throb within my breast. I come, I come! Thou wilt give me to drink in blissful freedom large draughts
from

S E R M O N VII. 185

from the fountain of life which flows at thy right hand, and with its streams gladdens the celestial regions! Thou wilt conduct me from this land of sorrows to those happy mansions where are pleasures forevermore!

How incumbent it is upon us to obey this divine invitation, and to commit ourselves to the guidance and protection of Him, *with whom there is no shadow of turning*, will be extremely apparent, when we consider the unavoidable vicissitudes to which we are ~~liable~~, and the mutability of all earthly things.

Do we sacrifice our ease and happiness at the shrine of wealth or ambition, in hopes of obtaining a refuge from the calamities of life? Alas, how are we deceived! Precarious and unstable at best is the utmost support which these can afford us. How soon may the malignity of fortune deprive us of those riches which her liberality heaped upon us! How suddenly
may

186 S E R M O N VII.

may our honours be snatched from us by the fickle and capricious disposition of those who conferred them! The gorgeous plume of fame and the costly ensigns of power may be converted in a moment into the badge of infamy and the appendages of obscurity. How lamentable a reverse does the most flourishing and opulent condition often experience! Not dominion and sovereignty themselves can boast an asylum from disasters, or claim an exemption from the revolutions of fate. Of this we have a memorable instance in the history of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. As he was one day walking in his palace, admiring the splendor and magnificence of the vast metropolis of his empire, while his heart, immoderately elated with prosperity, distended with the consciousness of his greatness; he could not forbear congratulating himself upon his superb possession with an enthusiasm which strikingly indicated the prevalence of pride over his soul: *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might*

S E R M O N VII. 187

might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Vain-glorious monarch! how necessary was some change of fortune to dispel the delusive mist which blinded thy understanding, check the unbridled career of thy arrogance, and restore thee to thy reason. Heaven saw the necessity of it; for while this ostentatious self-eulogium was yet in thy mouth, there fell this voice from heaven, *O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.* The same hour was the prediction verified; for he was not only deposed from his throne, and stripped of the splendor of royalty; but the inspired historian informs us, that *he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds claws.* How humiliating and uncommon a downfall from the loftiest pinnacle of dignity and grandeur!

No,

188 S E R M O N VII.

No, there is no stability beneath the sun. We cannot but see it, we must be deeply convinced of it. Every day, every hour confirms this momentous truth. The soul can find no center here to rest on. Why then suffer our affections to linger upon earth? Let us bid adieu to this fluctuating transitory scene, and seek that better place where all is steadfast and permanent. Arise, and come away, O my soul, thou art but an alien and a pilgrim here, thy native home is above. Thou art traveling to a heavenly country. How unsatisfactory and trivial are thy occupations, how insipid thy pleasures below! Aspire after that congenial employment and those sublime gratifications which are the lot of the just in another world. Let the gospel be thy guide: this holy and unfailing clue shall conduct thee in safety through the labyrinth of earthly vanity in which thou art now entangled. Like the star guiding the eastern Magi, it shall infallibly convey thee to the land of felicity. Look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith,

S E R M O N VII. 189

faith, the inspirer of every good affection which thou at any time feelest. In his favour let all thy desires and ambition concenter. Consider this gentle and affecting sollicitation of his to his mystic spouse the Church, as addressed to thyself: *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rocks,* * *in the recesses of the precipice, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* Here he desires her to bid adieu to worldly cares, and quit that scene of danger where a thousand snares are laid to

* *In the secret places of the stairs* is the expression in our translation, from which I have taken the liberty to deviate, as the word *recess* seems to correspond better with the Hebrew סֵתֶר *latibulum*, and סִרְיָנָה signifies *præcipitium* as well as *gradus*: and surely if we understand this passage as a call from the allurements of the world, the former signification is preferable, since it fitly indicates the peril of our situation; the pernicious follies and temptations, to which we are exposed while we continue below, bringing us into the alarming condition of a man who stands tottering on the verge of a precipice.

betray

190 S E R M O N VII.

betray the prudent as well as the incautious, and precipitate them into ruin. But how animating and delightful in particular is the conclusion! how charmingly expressive of his tender regard and favour towards his faithful adherents, and of the pleasure which he receives from their services! *Sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* And sweet, O gentle Saviour, are the means which thou usest to disengage us from this vain perishing world, and lift our souls to heaven. O still continue to draw us towards thee, make us run after the heavenly sound of thy voice, and, by the powerful attractions of thy grace, unite us to thyself for ever!

John Newton

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S E R M O N VIII.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

IN how concise yet striking a manner is here represented the effect of St. Paul's eloquence on Felix the Roman governor, at Cesarea! One word conveys an idea of this memorable effect more forcibly

192 S E R M O N VIII.

forcibly than a whole page descriptive of it could have done: Felix trembled! Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgement to come, must have been subjects for the most part new to a heathen's ear: and this, added to the emphatic manner in which they were discussed by the inspired Orator, must have made an impression on his mind, and excited emotions within him to which he had hitherto been a stranger. But instead of cherishing and encouraging feelings which had so happy a tendency, how readily did he endeavour to weaken and suppress them! The discourse of the Apostle awakened his terrors, and he could not bear that unusually alarming and awful prospect which it exhibited before him. Yet, conscious of the propriety and justice of his arguments, and ashamed to express any dissatisfaction at what the most obstinate prejudice could not but allow to be reasonable, he did not positively refuse an audience, and peremptorily order him from his presence, but dismissed him more moderately with this speech,

S E R M O N VIII. 193

*speech, Go thy way for this time ; when I
have a convenient season I will call for thee.*

The subterfuge of Felix is not at all uncommon in these times. How apt are we, when warned of the fatal consequences of a delay in the momentous search after eternal felicity, when reminded of what we owe to ourselves and heaven, to avail ourselves of every trivial insignificant excuse that occurs at the moment, in order to prevent discourse upon a subject which is disagreeable to us ! The only work which we came into the world to accomplish, the only one in which we are truly interested, is neglected and postponed from hour to hour, from day to day, on the slightest and most unjustifiable pretences, such as have not the least shadow or colour of reason ; while other things, so vastly inferior that they will not bear a comparison with it, are preferred before it, and suffered totally to engross our attention. An evasive answer is ever ready on this occasion, though no apology can be admitted for an inattention

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194 S E R M O N VIII.

to the calls of temporal interest, or an infringement on the ceremonials of fashion. How many resolve, and again resolve, on a speedy amendment of their conduct, but seldom have magnanimity enough to put their good resolutions in practice ; and, after all their imaginary fortitude, die in the same course of vanity and folly ! The noblest dispositions of the human soul too frequently lie buried under a load of trifles, which render it incapable of those sublime efforts for which it was designed ; and, having vitiated and debased its powers, give it a total disrelish for immortal things.

But surely this reluctance, irresolution, and supineness, when heaven itself is at stake, ought to be immediately opposed and subdued. For this end we should use our own sincere endeavours, and implore assistance from above. And, in order to establish in ourselves an habit of industry and perseverance in running the important race which is set before us, let us continually

S E R M O N VIII. 195

tinually meditate on that prize which is to be the reward of our labours,—a prize, compared with which all the treasures of the Indies appear contemptible, and the whole ample round of the creation itself has nothing excellent or valuable ! Let us look upwards with steadfast eye to him, who, having endured the tortures of the cross for our sakes, despising the shame, is now seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and learn from his example to trample down every obstacle with invincible courage and resolution. The frequent contemplation of those inestimable benefits which the effusion of his blood has procured for us, must awaken gratitude, the natural precursor of devotion. Through the merits of his passion, agonies, and death, we are intitled to that infinite recompence which mortal tongue can never express, nor mortal heart conceive, by him reserved from everlasting for them who aspire after his favour. This thought, if constantly indulged, and suffered to ope-

196 S E R M O N VIII.

rate with its full energy, must mould our lives into that form of holiness, without which none can see his glories, or be admitted to his kingdom. That boundless plenitude of happiness in which the just man shall participate with the sons of light in the heaven of heavens, the resplendent habitations of the Most High, if we take care to set it instantaneously before our fancy when afflictions press hard upon us, or pleasure with bewitching smile solicits us, would render us what we ought to be, what religion requires, and reason suggests—firm, intrepid, and inflexible; afflictions would press upon us without having the power to injure us, and pleasure with its blandishments solicit us in vain; no prospect of worldly advantage, however flattering, could tempt us to desert the banners of our victorious leader, but we should successfully militate against those innate depravities which often assail, and as often overpower us.

Did

S E R M O N VIII. 197

Did they, in particular, adopt this salutary measure, who are too apt, on every trivial occasion, to be hurried away by the impetuosity of unbridled passion, leaving reason far behind, its admonitions unregarded and its power subverted, and to this glorious display superadd the thought of judgement to come, what disagreeable consequences would they prevent! what poignant anguish escape! In what embarrassments, and frequently miseries, does a want of self-command in this particular involve us, though the causes which give birth to strife and anger would be utterly annihilated, when counterbalanced with an eternal crown. Let them reflect on that hour of universal judgement, which must determine their everlasting doom. This is, indeed, an awful consideration. Even the best acknowledge their dismay, and with Felix tremble at it. If the righteous themselves shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear! This is no romantic fiction of an enthusiastic brain, or wild fantastic dream of the poet,

198 S E R M O N VIII.

no priestcraft, or conceit of the visionary recluse, but found substantial reality. Such a time will assuredly arrive: Reason itself points towards it; and those Oracles, whose divine original is indisputably clear, so evident that not a doubt can remain to the rational and unprejudiced mind, make a full and ample discovery of it. They inform us, that a day will come, in which the Almighty *will judge the world in righteousness, and render to every man according to his works: to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality,——eternal life; but to them who disobey the truth, and obey unrighteousness,——indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.* Yes, this is truth, pure unsophisticated truth; and the good man glories in the thought; it is an unfailing source of devout triumph to his soul, it constitutes his heaven on earth; it supports him in every trial and distress, for he does not think the sufferings of the present moment worthy to be compared with the glories and the bliss that shall be revealed
here.

hereafter. Yet, yet (says he), I will bear up under all my afflictions; the season of probation will quickly be over; those incidents which seemed evil to my short-sighted reason will vanish away like a dream, and, like that, leave no trace behind it; soon shall the painful conflict cease, and one unbounded scene of happiness succeed! I shall exchange these low regions of mortality and care, for those happier seats above the skies, where the soul shall find in wonderful profusion every circumstance that can administer delight; where it shall feel its faculties enlarged to receive the most exquisite enjoyments, such as are well calculated to satisfy those immense capacities of happiness which are its boast and glory; it shall bathe unmolested in the fountain of life and joy, and freely drink of those pure rivers whose streams make glad the city of God. All its wishes shall be gratified as soon as formed, and all its powers heightened and refined! These are the thoughts with which he fortifies his mind against the assault of adversity; and

200 S E R M O N VIII.

from the solemn yet reviving view of future retribution and immortality, that righteousness and temperance, of which the Apostle speaks, as naturally flow, as salutary streams from a pure fountain. How easy a method is this of attaining such essential qualifications ! and shall we be remiss in our endeavours to attain them, when on them depends our everlasting fate, and we know not how soon we may be summoned away to that awful tribunal where we must render a strict account for our negligence in this great point ?



The Apostle says, that *the remaining time is short*, and therefore admonishes those who weep to be as though they wept not ; and those who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and those who use this world, not to abuse it : *for the fashion of this world passeth away*. He advises us to be without solicitude in temporal matters, and to direct our attention principally to those things which belong to another world. And surely every rational person will not fail

S E R M O N VIII. 201

fail to do this, when he considers on how precarious a tenure he possesses every thing below. Are we surrounded with abundance, and does opulence pour its luxuries around us? Yet in these how little reason have we for confidence! for *riches make themselves wings, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven.* Do titles, dignity, and honours, court our acceptance? These, if possible, are emptier and more unworthy of our trust than the former, being altogether lighter than vanity itself. All that we so highly prize, and so assiduously toil after here below, may be taken from us by a thousand accidents which no human foresight can provide against. Fortune is continually changing; her giddy wheel revolves with incessant motion; and he who was, one moment, exalted to the very summit, appears, the next, groveling at the bottom. We sometimes see her stripping the rich man of his possessions, and drawing the poor out of obscurity, to supply his place, and be invested with his dignities! She tumbles the monarch from
his

his throne, and raises the beggar from the mire to majesty and honour. Thus encompassed with vanity and mutability, it is our interest to secure a place in the favour of that Being, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; and, since there is nothing worth contending for below, nothing but what is frail and perishable, to labour for an immortal crown above, an inheritance in those regions which are above the reach of misfortune, chance, or vicissitude. While every thing changes around us, we shall attain a settled point of rest, if we are firm and resolute in making preparations for that permanent state to which we must be translated by death, and in centering our chief concern in our eternal welfare.

What must I do to be saved! said the trembling and astonished jailor at Philippi, to Paul and Silas. This is indeed a question no less interesting than awful! How few put it to their hearts, and suffer it to influence their conduct! Nor is the answer

swer to it difficult: it is often given in sacred writ, and particularly in this passage, no less emphatic than brief, *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.* Or, to use the words in which the Apostle himself answered it, *Believe on Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house*; meaning such an active belief as operates externally and visibly, eradicating all bad principles from the heart, and regulating the manners and actions. Let this belief be ours, and that peace of God, which surpasses human understanding, will not fail to ensue. Let us not when interrogated and advised by that internal monitor which the Almighty has given us as his delegate on earth, ask *what is Truth*, and retire with the indifference of Pilate, or say with Felix, *go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*; but listen to its exhortations with the most serious attention, and do our utmost to cherish the good affections which they may awaken. Should this best of friends, which

always

204 S E R M O N VIII.

always lays the truth before us without any diminution, ornament, or disguise, inform us, as the hand of old wrote in the presence of the Babylonian monarch, that we are *weighed in the balances, and are found wanting*, that we have omitted the performance of our duty, and consequently there is nothing in us which can entitle us to the divine favour, let us not fly terrified from the hearing of those momentous truths, but study to regain its approbation, and immediately endeavour to make it our friend, by conforming the whole tenour of our future life to its dictates. Surely, of all the blessings which heaven has bestowed on man, an approving conscience must be allowed to be the greatest: there is nothing on earth which can be put in competition with it. This, of itself, is sufficient to support us amidst all the calamities incident to this mortal state: if possessed of this, the heart will be chearful and serene, although the rigour of our fate deprives us of every thing besides; we may cry out with the magnanimous stoic of old,

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S E R M O N VIII. 205

I have lost nothing that deserves my regard, virtue and integrity are still my own; of these no blow of fortune can ever bereave me. He who is blessed with a good conscience may defy the threats of tyrants, behold without dismay the dagger drawn and aimed at his heart, and smile at death itself. But if this invaluable treasure be wanting, not prosperity itself can afford delight, and pleasure must become insipid; not all the advantages which this world can impart, accumulated together in one prodigious heap, can compensate for its loss. Place a man in the most desirable situation that can fall to the human lot; surround him with affluence, with the riches of both the Indies; crown him with dignity and honour; invest him with universal power and dominion; yet if his heart be not at ease, if he be destitute of that peace of mind which only conscious innocence and virtue can confer, all these distinctions are utterly thrown away and lost upon him; in vain he takes the timbrel and the harp, and endeavours to rejoice at the sound of the organ; joy flies

206 S E R M O N VIII.

far from him, and his bosom is a stranger to that complacency which is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of prosperity. His face may wear a smile, but his heart bears no part in it. He may truly say with the afflicted Job, *my harp is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.* So true are these words of the wisest of men, *The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities: but a wounded spirit who can bear?*

Is this then so eminent, so estimable a blessing, and shall we not labour with unremitting diligence for its security? Let us spurn with a laudable contempt any advantage, how great soever, which must be purchased at the expence of it. How truly worthy of our utmost attention is the advice of the Psalmist on this occasion! Oh, may it always be predominant in our minds! *Keep innocency, and do the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last:* and a far greater than him has also said, *What is a man profited if he shall gain the world, and lose his own soul? or what shall*

S E R M O N VIII. 207

shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Let these words, uttered by the greatest personage that ever appeared on earth, who, now seated on the throne of heaven, reigns for ever there, Jesus, our mediator and redeemer, sink deep into the heart, and leave an impression never to be erased. When tempted to deviate from our duty, they will be sufficient to fix and confirm us in it, if considered in their due extent and energy. For surely the whole circle of the universe contains nothing equivalent to the soul: not ten thousand worlds could redeem it. Beware then of endangering it, O ye, whom Fortune has entrenched in a variety of blessings; and ye, to whom she has been more parsimonious, and denied those gifts which perhaps are better withheld from you: ye are both equally interested in the care and preservation of it; the loss of it is equally irreparable to both. The same immortal prize awaits your caution and fidelity in keeping it, and the same punishment is reserved for neglect in this important

208 S E R M O N VIII.

important matter. Be sober, be vigilant, for your infernal adversary is continually on the watch, and walking about in search of some one to devour: his snares are always spread, in hopes of some new prey. Now is it high time to rouse ourselves from the lethargy of impenitence, and with all the activity of genuine zeal to set about securing that incorruptible crown, which, once lost, is lost for ever. The night is far advanced, the decisive day approaches: repudiate therefore the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Assume the breast-plate of righteousness, and let your companion and instructor be the Gospel of Peace, above all, taking the shield of Faith, that ye may be able to make a strenuous resistance, and to extinguish all the fiery darts aimed at you by the great foe of man. This should be done with the utmost expedition; delay were criminal in a case of such moment. But a few hours perhaps, and many who compose this audience may be no more! Or should
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S E R M O N VIII. 209

our lives be extended to the utmost limits allotted to man, yet Time, with ever flowing stream, is conveying us fast into the boundless ocean of Eternity. How lamentable a state, should we be compelled to launch forth into it before we had properly equipped ourselves! How destitute, how friendless and forlorn, indeed, if we have neglected the previous measures necessary for recommending ourselves to the most powerful and the best of friends! Meditate on this, and transfer your solicitude from earthly to heavenly things. With Mary chuse that better part which shall never be taken from you. The end of all things is at hand. Prepare for Judgement to come. St. Paul tells us, that we must all appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, where no elevation of rank can exempt us, and no obscurity or lowliness of condition conceal us, from the minute scrutiny of a just and impartial Judge; where all shall receive their final sentence according to their actions, where the wicked shall be consigned to everlasting punishment,

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210 S E R M O N VIII.

but the righteous to Life eternal! Let the happy destiny of the latter be ever in our view; and let us ardently endeavour to secure it for ourselves on that eventful Day; in the mean time, humbly soliciting the assistance of that Being, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, and imploring him to multiply his mercies upon us, that, under his guidance and direction, proceeding in the path which he has pointed out, we may so circumspectly pass through temporal things, that we finally lose not the things eternal.

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

REVELATION xii. 1.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

HAVING just before informed us, by way of ushering in the mystery which was to ensue, that the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail, the Evangelist tells us, that there appeared this

212 S E R M O N IX.

wonder in heaven. The term in the original Greek is σημεῖον, which denotes any portentous or extraordinary appearance. The woman seems to mean the Church, which is frequently represented in Scripture under the symbol of the feeble and more defenceless sex; particularly in the Song of Solomon, where she is beautifully described as acting in character of a bride, whose spouse, support, and protection, is Jesus Christ.

In order to understand this mysterious vision, it is obvious that an analysis is necessary; we must separately examine its constituent parts.

In the first place, she is said to be clothed with the sun. The church, destitute and bare in herself, has neither ornament nor vesture of her own: for this she must apply to the Redeemer of the world. He is her covering, her embellishment, and her glory. He is here typified by the sun, in conformity with the appellation of the prophet

S E R M O N IX. 213

phet Malachi, who denominates him *the Sun of Righteousness*. He is elsewhere called in this mystical part of the Scriptures, or rather he calls himself in the person of his angel, *the bright and morning star*: and if this is expressive of his glory, much more is the sun, the most conspicuous, glorious, and immense of all the ethereal luminaries.

With this august description it may not be unseasonable to compare, by way of illustration, what the prophet Isaiah addresses to the church: *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*. And what he says elsewhere, that she shall be *a crown of glory, a royal diadem in the hand of her God*, corresponds with the dignity of her appearance in this vision: indicating the high rank which she holds in the estimation of the Supreme Being, it renders her in some measure worthy of this consummate magnificence and stupendous majesty, and con-

firms the supposition that this striking form represents the Church.

The moon was under her feet. The moon is an emblem of the world; well representing by its incessant variations and revolutions the mutability and inconstancy of earthly things. She appears trampling upon the moon. She suffers not terrestrial objects to engross her attention. She cannot only look with an eye of indifference on the world and all its allurements, but even spurn them from her with contempt. Forgetful of the things which are behind, and regarding only those which are before, she presses onwards with unabating ardor to the heavenly goal, and accounts the most sumptuous treasures, the most splendid honours and superb magnificence, but dross, but despicable refuse, despicable in the lowest extreme, when set in competition with the infinitely superior prize which Jesus invites her to win.

But

S E R M O N IX. 215

But it deserves our attention, that before she can attain this heavenly frame of mind, before she can completely transfer her affection from things beneath to things above, she must be clothed with the sun; she must renounce all thoughts of her own merits, and trust for acceptance to the merits of her Saviour alone. Leaning on the Cross, she must disclaim every other support, and with the most profound humiliation confess her own debility and insufficiency. 'Tis the renovating influence of his Spirit only which can metamorphose the inclinations and desires into that divine similitude without which it is impossible to look down upon human concerns with that due degree of contempt which must precede a steadfast attachment to celestial things.

Upon her head was a crown of twelve stars. Here some are willing to understand the twelve signs of the zodiac, and, by way of elucidating their hypothesis, enu-

216 S E R M O N IX.

merate the different parts of the world which they confront, where the Gospel was promulgated. But, according to the best interpreters, the twelve Apostles seem to be meant by this symbol; who, as so many burning and shining lights, dispelled the cloud of superstition, and irradiated the darkness of ignorance which hung over the world.

Crowned with this more than imperial diadem, how infinitely does she eclipse the united lustre and pageantry of all the monarchs in the universe! This sublime image brings to remembrance a beautiful passage descriptive of her in the Song of Solomon: *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon; clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?* Here she is delineated in a similar manner, though with far less grandeur and sublimity: nor can we wonder at this, when we consider that St. John was rapt in holy vision up to the Heaven of Heavens, like the apostle Paul, who was caught up into
Paradise,

S E R M O N IX. 217

Paradise, and heard and saw unutterable things !

But for what purpose does this glorious personage make her appearance ? To afford an opportunity for the display of the divine goodness.

In the sequel of the chapter we are told, that there was war in heaven ; *Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven* ; and the great dragon, which is Satan, being cast out into the earth, together with his angels, persecuted the woman who was adorned with the coronet of stars. This obviously represents the troubles and calamities which the Church was to experience in future times. But, in order to revive the drooping hearts of the afflicted Christians, and preclude all cause for despondency, they are informed, that to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness,

218 S E R M O N IX.

wildernefs, into her place. Confolation and deliverance are ftill at hand in the worft and moft difaftrous of feafons. The malignant ftratagems of their infernal foe fhall be rendered abortive. Secured as it were within an impregnable fortrefs by the favour of the Almighty, they fhall look down with fuperior greatnefs, as from fome lofty eminence, upon the fury of their enemies, a fury impotent as rancorous. And fhall they, diftinguifhed as they are with fuch a defence, be terrified at the view of any difficulties or calamities whatever? Shall the moft cruel perfecutions, that man or the powers of darknefs can inflict, appear formidable when God himfelf has promifed his protection, and underneath them are his everlafting arms? Has he in any age abandoned thofe whom he loved? Did he not with his glorious arm, dividing the waters before his chofen Ifrael, to make himfelf an everlafting name, and render omnipotence amiable by condefcenfion and mercy, lead them through the deep in perfect fafety, as on dry land, and, confidently

S E R M O N IX. 219

consistently with his repeated promise to their progenitors, give them possession of a country abounding with every thing that was delightful and excellent? How ample a compensation was this for all the hardships and injurious treatment which they had experienced in Egypt! But even there he watched over their servitude with unremitting tenderness, and only permitted it for a time, in order to advance the completion of his gracious design, and render the interposition of his goodness the more conspicuous in the end. *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.* With more than parental love and pity he conducted them through the howling wilderness during the space of forty years; and, even though they requited his transcendent benignity with the most ungrateful and rebellious contumacy, he would not withdraw his support from them. Did he not with the same affectionate care watch over the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, and preserve them from the fury of the rapacious flame, in so wonder-

220 S E R M O N IX.

wonderful a manner, that not even a single hair of their head was singed? Did not his saving power attend his servant Daniel in the dismal cavern into which he had been thrown by the malice of his enemies, and stop the ravenous mouths of the lions in his behalf, since he was found innocent before his God? Shall those then who serve him with fidelity in any age or nation abandon themselves to despair, fear, or distrust? Shall they not rather, with the apostle, take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for the sake of Jesus Christ?

When the tender mercies of his God arose before the mind of the sweet Psalmist of Israel in pleasing remembrance, instead of this desponding exclamation, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from the words of my complaint?* this more chearful and triumphant strain was heard, *Awake, my glory, awake, lute and harp. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil;*

S E R M O N IX. 221

evil; for thou art with me. Conscious of his assiduous endeavours to recommend himself to the favour of the Almighty by a course of unintermitted integrity, and fully persuaded that in the trying season of distress he would hide him in his divine pavilion, he delivers up his soul to the most ardent emotions of confidence and exultation.

In the chapter which furnishes the subject of these meditations, how remarkably is exemplified the Apostle's assertion, that *God hath chosen weak things, to confound the things which are mighty,* or put them to shame, as it is expressed in the original. A woman, weak and helpless in herself, defeats the malevolent designs of the infernal dragon, the prince of darkness. Assisted by divine power, she flies into the wilderness, and, secure under the shelter of omnipotence, baffles the pursuits and defies the fury of her cruel adversary. Though he casts out of his mouth water as a flood, to hurry her

222 S E R M O N IX.

away by the violence of the torrent, yet in consequence of the sovereign ordinance of Him who drieth up the waves of the sea with a single nod, who commands the sun, and it shineth not; the earth opens her mouth, and swallows up the destructive inundation. Thus once he commanded the deep to retire on either hand, and afford his favoured people a safe passage to the further shore, as a retreat from the rage of their hostile pursuers. Thus did he once order the sun and moon to stand still, in compliance with the request of his servant Joshua, and to give his Chosen an opportunity of taking vengeance on their enemies. But such super-natural exertions of power are only smaller instances of His omnipotence; whose awful Fiat once pronounced can instantaneously reverse the course of nature, can call myriads of worlds from non-existence, or annihilate them again!

If this Almighty Guardian be for us, who or what can be against us? His favour shall

S E R M O N IX. 223

shall be a shield which shall enable us to repel the assaults of the tempter, and quench his fiery darts. Thus armed, we shall not only be invincible, but also invulnerable to his keenest and most envenomed shafts. He who is goodness and clemency itself will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to endure, but will together with the temptation provide us a way to escape, that we may not be unequal to the task which he requires. Let us then be solicitous to obtain His approbation alone, and think the applause of millions far too dearly purchased at the expence of his regard. When the prospect of worldly advantages invites us to desert the banners of our heavenly Leader, and apostatize from our duty, let us continue steadfast and immoveable in our attachment, and say with St. Peter, *though I should die, yet will I not deny thee*; not confining our zeal like him to mere professions, but evincing its sincerity by an indefatigable adherence to his precepts, even to the last moment of life. For is not this the declaration of our Redeemer,

224 S E R M O N IX.

Redeemer, *Whosoever is ashamed of me before men, of him will I also be ashamed before my Father, and before his angels?*

Dejected mortal, art thou surrounded with temptations? Does adversity lay her iron hand upon thee, and endeavour to force thee from the path of rectitude? Emulate the patience and magnanimity of the Uzzéan sufferer of old. View him beset with dangers, and surrounded with distresses; his extensive property invaded, and his vast riches pillaged by the rapacious Sabeen and Chaldean bands; the children of his soul snatched from him by an untimely death, his inferiors treating him with contempt and abhorrence, and even the wife of his bosom obliquely upbraiding him for still retaining his integrity, and soliciting him to curse his Maker, and die. But what admirable constancy, resignation, and piety, are expressed in his answer to her importunity: *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* What an accumulation of injury, affliction,
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and misery! Yet no disaster which the malice of the great foe of man could inflict, not all this vast, unparalleled complication of wretchedness and woe, could induce him to deviate from that regard to conscience which had always regulated his conduct. He might justly be said to be tried in the fiery ordeal of adversity and affliction, as of all who ever appeared on earth none but the Son of God experienced more ignominious treatment and more bitter sufferings. Yet, so far was he from murmuring at the heavy visitations of heaven, that he did not even once distrust his Maker's goodness, but with humble acquiescence and heavenly meekness kissed the tremendous scourge which was held forth to chastize him, fully convinced that the Judge of the whole earth could not but do right. Nor did this devout submission to the will of heaven fail of being crowned, in proper time, with its due reward: for we are told, that he was not only restored to his former opulence and splendor, but the Almighty, having found him a perfect

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and upright man even to the last, doubled all his possessions, which were immense before, even then entitling him to the honour of being styled the greatest potentate of all the East. Thus were his latter days distinguished with far greater blessings and felicity than the former part of his life.

Harbour not then a suspicion injurious to the goodness or justice of thy God. Doubt not for a moment either his ability or inclination to deliver those who make Him alone the object of their confidence. He, in his own good time, will render thee happy. Be studious in the mean while to perform thy duty, and leave the event to His disposal, who knows best what is fit for thee. Perhaps a propitious destiny similar to that of holy Job awaits thee; whose unblemished virtue and sanctity were crowned with a recompense even in this world. But if thou should'st fail of thy reward in this life, thou art sure of obtaining it in another: of this, He who

S E R M O N IX. 227

is Truth itself has repeatedly and expressly informed thee.

And thou who labourest under various hardships and persecutions on account of thy adherence to thy Redeemer, recall his words to thy remembrance, words which cannot be sufficiently impressed upon thy mind, as an antidote of sufficient power to repel all terror and despondency: *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.* Eye hath not seen, nor ear ever heard, neither has the heart of man been able to conceive, the immensity of that bliss which thy Saviour has ordained for those who resolutely persevere in their attachment to his precepts in spite of all opposition, and would rather chuse to die than deny him. These are the happy effects of Redeeming Love. This glorious prize the effusion of his precious blood procured for thee. Inestimable, stupendous acquisition!

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228 S E R M O N IX.

tion ! Oh, how is man ennobled ! Is this the frail being that was formed of dust ! How counter-balanced the obscurity and meanness of his original ! Exalted to the dignity and happiness of angels ! He returns indeed to his native dust, but it is only for a little time. Death has not long dominion over him. Behold him raised, like the phoenix, out of his own ashes to a second life. Behold him rising from the tomb, fresh and serene as the morning light ; his nature purified from all remains of terrestrial dross, and arrayed in the glories of heaven ! The corruptible has put on incorruption, and the mortal is invested with immortality. How does he exult and triumph in the change ! Instead of mortal debility and error, he enjoys seraphic perfection. Having born the image of the earthy for a small space, he shall bear the image of the heavenly for ever. His soul expands to the utmost extent of its renovated faculties for the full fruition of that sublime felicity which shall continue unimpaired through all eternity.

Escorted

S E R M O N IX. 229

Escorted by a glittering convoy of angels, he soars far above this dim speck of earth, passes from star to star, from world to world, till he attains the glorious regions of the Blest, and the Heaven of Heavens, where he is more immediately admitted into the great Eternal Presence, and mingles with the innumerable choir of Cherubim and Seraphim who encircle the Throne of Light, warbling in concert ineffably melodious to their golden harps that exalted and mysterious song which only angels and archangels use, to praise the King of Heaven !

When we turn our view forwards to this triumphant and glorious condition, all the parade and splendor of human greatness is annihilated. Folly drops her gaudy plume, and has no longer power to charm; we can look with an eye of neglect and disdain on the golden lures of ambition, the gorgeous equipage of imperial pomp, and the united wealth of both the Indies. Did the sons of power and grandeur maturely

230 S E R M O N IX.

reflect on this blissful and elevated destiny, surely they would cease to glory in the superb display of their honorary badges, vain symbols of distinction, which must soon moulder into dust and be forgotten. Infatuated minds ! Is it thus you depress the flight of those ambitious and noble desires which were interwoven in your nature for far different purposes ; which are winged for heaven and immortality, and ought to settle on nothing beneath God himself ? Shall a spirit congenial with angelic natures be compelled to place all its happiness in the thought of being attended with a long and sumptuous retinue ? Shall it be divorced from the proper object of its worship to sacrifice at the shrine of vanity, and idolize what ought to be at most but a secondary concern ? Extricate it from that labyrinth of worldly cares in which it is at present bewildered, purify it from terrestrial film, dissipate the gross mists with which a too close attention to sublunary objects obscures its view, and things will appear to it in their proper light ; the
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S E R M O N IX. 231

short-lived kingdoms of this world, and all their magnificence, will be considered as mean and contemptible, when contrasted with that incomparably superior kingdom in another world, which shall never have an end.

Balanced with this transcendent prize, how light and inconsiderable is the heaviest load of mortal sorrow found! every care vanishes, every affliction dwindles to nothing. Behold, in the gloomy clouds which envelop this state of mortality, a radiant bow appears, which diffuses light and happiness all around, and presages pardon and peace to the whole human race, the cheering pledge of endless happiness, when Time shall be no more! Not more enlivening to the view of the small remnant of mankind which was rescued from the deluge, was that ethereal signal which the Almighty suspended aloft in token of his universal covenant with his creatures, that he would drown the world no more; — the indication only of temporal security:

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but this resplendent bow was kindled by the efficacious beams of the Sun of Righteousness, as the earnest of our eternal welfare. The hand of Redeeming Love reared this pacific symbol, and expanded its beautiful effulgence on high to revive the drooping hearts of fallen mortals, to give light to them who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to illumine that sable assemblage of night and terrors in which despondency sometimes involves even the best, and always overwhelms the bad, as it were in a profound, unfathomable abyss. Oh haste then, sinner, to partake of the vivifying influence of its lustre, and ardently adore that goodness which has thus kindly provided for thy necessities. Sick of continually pursuing the same tedious round of vanity, at length relent, and spurn the suggestions of folly, whose shrine thou hast too long frequented, her zealous votary, her too passive and easy prey. Apply to the Saviour of the world for relief. He has assumed the gracious character of thy intercessor with his offended Father, whose

S E R M O N IX. 233

whose anger He alone can deprecate. How ample, how amazing are the treasures of his bounty ! By an ingenuous confession of thy misdeeds, ease thy soul of that burden which weighs it down to the dust, and is become intolerable. Cast all thy care on Him, for though the whole world contemn and shun thee, yet, if thou art sincere in thy desire to conciliate his mercy, he still careth for thee ; day and night shall sooner cease, and the world be torn from its centre, than thou be removed from his protection and favour. Go to the Cross. Ah, how distressing and mournful a spectacle ! but at the same time pregnant with comfort inexpressible to thy dejected and languishing spirit. Is this the supreme ruler of heaven, the maker of the universe ! And does he bleed for such a criminal as thee ! Stupendous force of condescending love ! Can eloquence of man, or towering thought of angel, do justice to the vast unbounded theme ? Where now is the insufferable blaze of that majesty, at which once the brightest seraphim were forced to veil their eyes

234 S E R M O N IX.

eyes with both their wings, unable to gaze upon its effulgence. He exchanged it for the coarse clothing of humanity. Behold all the God concealed in mortal form ! In human soldiery, is it thus you treat the King of kings ? What insults, what unparalleled indignities ! Suspended on the ensanguined cross, like the most execrable malefactor ! What agonizing throes convulse his sacred body ! Oh, were you conscious of the dignity of that illustrious, that celestial Personage whom you thus abuse and persecute, how would you fly from his awful presence, and call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon you, and shelter you from the lightning of his anger !

Didst thou not hear that struggling gasp, presaging the disunion of his soul from the body ? At that mournful gasp all nature groans, trembling to her inmost foundation. His bleeding bosom heaves with the closing pang, he is just on the point of breathing out his sinless spirit ;
he

S E R M O N IX. 235

he commends his soul into the hands of his great Father, then bows his head, and expires. It is finished! the mighty work of our Redemption is accomplished! He dies, the just for the unjust, the guiltless for the guilty; and impious man shall live for ever!

Yes, he has effectually made thy peace with heaven, he has reconciled thee and all mankind to thy alienated, thy offended God. With what propriety is he styled the Prince of Peace! Did he not, just before his death, address the repentant thief who was crucified by his side, in these animating words? *This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* Why then should'st thou despair? Shall not his clemency be extended also to thee, and to the vilest of the vile who sue for it with becoming humility and contrition? Repair to this divine Bethesda; here shall the sin-sick soul obtain a sovereign remedy for its most inveterate maladies. No angel here is necessary as at Jerusalem to go down at a certain season and trouble

236 S E R M O N IX.

trouble the salutary wave. 'Tis not the first alone who steps in that shall be cured. All who chuse it may bathe at once, and at every season, in these extensive and heavenly streams, and they will come out restored to perfect health and soundness. Fall prostrate at his feet, with weeping Magdalen bewail thy offences, and he will speak comfort to thy heart in this benign assurance, Arise, thy sins are forgiven. Exclaim in unfeigned and devout adoration, O injured Saviour, prince of Light! And didst thou patiently submit to these brutal indignities for my sake! Wast thou insulted, despised, cruelly scourged and crucified, that I might be exalted to celestial dignity? Didst thou consent to wear a crown of piercing thorns, that I might be adorned with an incorruptible crown, a diadem of glory which never decays nor fades, in the regions of immortal bliss? O loaden with the heaviest sufferings, too heavy for human constancy to bear! *Who is he that condemneth?* since thou hast died, or rather art risen again, making intercession for me at the

the right hand of thy Almighty Father.
Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,
or peril, or sword? No; let adversity assail
 me with its sharpest arrows,—protected by
 the shield of thy mercy, I shall return vic-
 torious from the conflict. Yes, *I am per-*
suaded, that neither death, nor life, nor an-
gels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things
present, nor things to come, nor height, nor
depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to
separate me from the love of God which is in
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Well mayest thou exult in this trium-
 phant language. Well mayest thou offer
 up the tributary incense of thy praise to
 Him, who all inshrined as he was in hap-
 piness unutterable, in glory inaccessible, re-
 linquished the Throne of Light, and came
 down to extricate his bewildered and mi-
 serable creatures from the labyrinth of vice
 and error, to turn them from darkness to
 light, to announce glad tidings to the
 meek, to proclaim liberty to the captives,

and to bind up the wounds of the broken-hearted, and comfort all that mourn. *Therefore (exclaims the prophet) my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Hail Jesus, Saviour of mankind! restorer of a ruined world! Hail bright and morning Star, auspicious Sun of righteousness! we bless the appearance of thy healing ray. How necessary are thy tutelary beams to regulate our dubious steps through this gloomy vale of mortality, and conduct us in safety through that variety of snares and dangers with which we are surrounded! If thou withholdest but for a moment the brightness of thy countenance, what are we? how lost! how benighted! how destitute! Ruin, despair, and death, must be our inevitable destiny.

With

With what enthusiastic admiration does the world contemplate the behaviour of those celebrated heroes recorded in the Grecian and Roman annals! How lavish has antiquity been of its eulogiums on their magnanimity, their patriotism, their fortitude! But these, when contrasted with the Son of God, in his human character, like stars before the approach of day, hide their diminished heads: their fainter light is totally absorbed in the overwhelming flood of his superior radiance. Let Rome no longer boast of her Curtius and her Decii. Impartiality, even prejudice itself must allow, that these are indisputably inferior names. They died but for their own country. A thirst of glory and immortal fame seems to have been the governing principle of their conduct. Their end was honourable in every respect, and their urns were bedewed with the affectionate tears of their country. Their names were never mentioned without symptoms of the profoundest sorrow; and perpetual veneration, almost bordering

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on idolatry, was paid to their memories. His situation exhibits a far different portrait, entirely the reverse of this favourable picture. His death was of infinitely more extensive utility and importance. This heavenly hero resigned his life for the benefit of the whole race of mankind, for his enemies as well as his friends. He could not be stimulated by any ambitious desire, or prospect of renown among that obdurate nation which he honoured with his nativity. His exit was extremely ignominious; crucifixion being a Roman punishment of the most opprobrious kind, and appropriated only to atrocious criminals; among whom he was numbered, suffering in the middle of two flagrant culprits. Oh, view his lamb-like meekness, his consummate obedience to his Father's sovereign will, his devout and wonderful heroism in his last moments! How incomparably does this consistent and admirable deportment transcend the thoughtless intrepidity of the Roman patriots! They yield the immortal palm to Him, as his unquestionable due; and

S E R M O N IX. 241

and their vaunted virtue, which once appeared of such uncommon magnitude, dwindles into nothing.

And does the God, the supreme arbiter of nature, submit to her laws, and die! Does he sleep, cold and motionless, in the gloomy mansion of the silent grave! How dreary and narrow an apartment! how unfit for Him who reigned above pavilioned in eternal day, and inhabited Immensity! But short is the triumph of death; soon must he surrender up his illustrious prey. On the third morning the wondering stars beheld him burst the barrier of the tomb, and ascend triumphant through the air, leading captivity captive, having subdued and spoiled principalities and powers, and overwhelming his presumptuous adversaries with astonishment and confusion! Ye empyrean abodes, open your everlasting doors, and let in the King of Glory! Thou heaven of heavens, resound with universal jubilee, and admit the celestial Conqueror to the right hand of

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the paternal majesty on high! He has completely foiled the prince of darkness, and all his confederate powers.

In consequence of this victorious and superlatively momentous action, what a metamorphosis takes place in the appearance of the human condition! How wonderful a contrast! Lately, how deprest! now beyond measure exalted! Where is that vale of tears through which we traveled, struggling with difficulties, and inwrapt in darkness! Where are those horrors which threatened us on every side? They are all vanished, and Paradise succeeds in their room. Behold in the middle of it the Tree of Life, blooming in conspicuous majesty, and loaden with the ambrosial fruitage of heaven. Dismissed are the terrific cherubim, and sheathed the flaming sword, which were appointed at the fall of man to guard the passage to it. The heavenly Jerusalem appears unfolding wide her dazzling portals; stupendous magnificence! her walls of jasper, her foundations adorned with every

S E R M O N IX. 243

every precious stone, and her streets all of pure gold. She has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in her; for the glory of God and of the Lamb enlightens her. Myriads of flaming Seraphim appear, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours. What brightness! what excellence! far outshining the splendid appearance of *the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain*, far excelling whatever the most sublime imagination on earth can form of beautiful and glorious! they cast their crowns of gold before the eternal Throne, singing, *Halleluiah! blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be ascribed to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.*

How forcibly did this glorious prospect operate upon the minds of the martyrs of old! 'Twas this which supported them in the midst of their torments, and made them

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smile at death itself. The rack, the gibbet, and the flames, were all defied with a resolution and intrepidity which astonished their persecutors. Neither blandishment nor violence could prevail upon them to deny their great master; their fidelity continued inflexible to all intreaties, impregnable to all assaults. They knew that their sufferings would be only momentary, but their reward eternal.

Our own history in particular records many eminent and admirable examples of religious constancy and perseverance. How amiable a portrait does it draw of that internal composure and divine complacency which a well-grounded confidence in heaven can confer in the midst of the severest trials! See those illustrious candidates for the crown of martyrdom embracing the stake to which they are to be bound, and crying out, with a kind of seraphic extasy, Welcome the cross of Christ; welcome everlasting life. All sense of pain seems to be subdued, their hope is full of immortality,

S E R M O N IX. 245

talities, and their bosoms pant for the fruition of celestial glories. The consciousness that they are dying for their Saviour's sake, and that their record is on high with their God, hurries away their souls as it were from earth, and gives them an antepast of heaven!—O ever memorable train of Worthies, beyond description great were your sufferings here below, and proportionably great is your recompence above! Your season of probation is over, and you have won the immortal prize. Escaped from the furious tempest, the divine haven receives you in safety, and angels congratulate your arrival on the heavenly shore. You have victoriously fought under the divine banners of Messiah, and with invincible courage despised the united threats of earth and hell: therefore, instead of being crowned with a wreath of perishing laurels, the reward of valour and conquest among men, your heads are encircled with a diadem of light, and you far outshine the morning star, or the sun shining in his noon-day strength, to all eternity. You

246 S E R M O N IX.

minge with the angelic harpers ten thousand times ten thousand who surround the eternal Throne, and learn their mystic song. To you has your gracious Redeemer given to eat of the Tree of life and bliss, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God—to regale yourselves with its delicious fruits for ever and ever!

Angels, archangels, and all the innumerable company of heaven, strike from the golden strings of your melodious lutes hymns of extatic triumph in honour of the Lamb that was slain, and celebrate the mysteries of Redeeming Love! We, feeble, erring mortals (oh, how inadequate to the attempt!) will aspire to join your lofty Halleluiah with our inferior song. But although our song be inferior, yet not so is our subject. Not you ever did, or ever can sing a sublimer theme! The grateful anthem of praise which the lip of man pours forth, if it flows from a humble and pious heart, shall harmonize with your triumphant chorus, and ascend like incense, an oblation

S E R M O N IX. 247

oblation acceptable and sweet, together with your exalted strain before the Throne of God. *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.* The great infernal dragon, the accuser of your brethren day and night, who was expelled from the regions of bliss with his angels, is now bound in adamantine fetters, and cast into the abyfs of penal fire, to be reserved for the judgement of the great day. What injuries and wretchedness lately abounded! What cruelties did this formidable destroyer exercise over mankind! but the superior power of our Redeemer has totally plucked away his envenomed sting—has crushed and subdued his strength, and mortals are the hapless victims of his rage no more. Therefore, rejoice, ye heavens; and thou in particular, O earth! exult over the impotence of thy implacable foe thus confined in everlasting chains, and hurled headlong to the realms of endless darkness. With thy symphonious though

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248 S E R M O N IX.

feeble praises answer the celestial hymn, sing loud Hosannas to the Highest, and swell the heavenly jubilee !

And thou, O renovating Spirit, purifier of the affections, shed abroad in copious and diffusive streams thy mystic, thy reviving influence over our souls, fainting and overpowered as we are with the burden of our infirmities ! Alas, what discord and confusion has the first fatal transgression in Paradise introduced into the harmony of the moral system ! How does our innate depravity jar with every good and virtuous principle ! Suppress those internal commotions, and with thy divine energy tranquillize and meliorate the heart ; that the disposition of our mind, and the whole tenour of our conduct, may be in perfect unison with these seraphic strains ; and when, at the summons of death, we put off this coarse habiliment of clay, we may be translated to the regions of immortality and joy, and personally mingle with the

S E R M O N IX. 249

radiant choir of Archangels who stand around the eternal Throne. Oh, qualify us to enjoy with them the beatific vision of the Godhead, and to proclaim the clemency of our Redeemer in Halleluiahs ardent and sublime as theirs, for ever and for ever!

SERMON

S. E. R. M. O. N. 249

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SERMON

S E R M O N X.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 40, 41.

*I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live
for ever—*

*If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand
take hold on judgement; I will render
vengeance to mine enemies, and will re-
ward them that hate me.*

THIS is part of that poetical rapture
which broke from the lips of Moses,
on the consideration of his Maker's cle-
mency to Israel, and his unbounded great-
ness :

252 S E R M O N X.

ness : and surely never was the dignity of Omnipotence celebrated in sublimer and more beautiful strains. In the words before us, the Author of the universe himself is introduced, is visibly represented to us as it were, giving a display of his grandeur and power. He announces to the world in the most majestic and awful language his ability to inflict punishment on those who set his might at defiance, and with ungrateful hatred requite the offer of his love. This ability is set forth in a stronger and more striking light still in the context, where he describes himself as of power to kill, and to make alive, to wound and to heal ; as a Being, out of whose hand nothing can deliver, and who reigns, without a rival, absolute Lord of the material and immaterial worlds, the only-existing God ; to whom belongeth vengeance and recompence ; who, in the dreadful moment of his anger, will make his arrows drunk with blood, and that with the blood of the slain.

Alarming

S E R M O N X. 253

Alarming and terrible indeed is such a view of the Deity to those who have wilfully violated his laws, and contemned alike his promises and his threats. Surely, if their hearts are not irrecoverably depraved, if they have not lost all sensibility to what is awful, and all regard for what is good, this solemn exhibition must leave the most affecting and salutary impressions on their minds; they will feel themselves irresistibly forced into a desire instantaneously to forsake those pernicious paths into which they have been seduced by the insidious adversary of mankind, and which terminate at length in inevitable ruin. When they reflect that his justice requires him to execute his vengeance on the presumptuous scorner of his precepts, and that whatever he wills, his omnipotence enables him to perform; that as he formed them out of nothing, so he can to their original nothing reduce them in an instant; and that the flame of his resentment is kindled, which, raging with tenfold and tremendous violence, will, if not extinguished by
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254 S E R M O N X.

the tears of immediate contrition, consume them for ever; when they reflect on all these circumstances, it seems incredible that they should wish still to persist in their irreverence towards the Holiest and the most powerful of beings—still reject the admonitions of conscience, and keep their bosoms steeled against all remorse.

Considerations of this solemn nature are well adapted to impress the mind with awe, and ought to be cherished with assiduous care in every breast, as effectual preservatives from the allurements of vice, and incentives to the practice of piety and virtue. For when invited by the solicitations of interest, pleasure, or ambition, to deviate from that line of conduct which heaven has prescribed as the only guide to immortal felicity, what method so proper for recalling our feet, and establishing them in the paths of rectitude again, as the painting before our imagination, in lively and glowing colours, the omnipotent Ruler of the universe; Him to whom
all

S E R M O N X. 255

all hearts lie open, and from whom no secrets are concealed, bowing the heavens and coming down in dreadful majesty to recompence his creatures according to their respective deserts; to consign some to everlasting life, and others to everlasting shame and contempt; some to infinite bliss, and others to an eternity of pain? What too can mortals find so happily calculated for checking the licentious excursions of roving fancy, as the reflection, that every thought which they indulge, that all those embryos of guilt which lie concealed from human observation within the most secret recesses of the mind, shall be brought forth to light, and written with a sun-beam in the view both of men and angels, by that tremendous Power, in whose sight stars and sun are but dust, the very heavens are not pure, and the angels themselves are reputed as nothing? *He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.*

But

256 S E R M O N X.

But let not the humble contrite heart, which bleeds at the review of past offences, and is weighed down to the dust with the sense of its unworthiness, be dismayed with that awful display which the justice and majesty, the greatness and omniscience of the Deity, beheld in conjunction, exhibit: let not this deter it from approaching to the foot of his Throne, from casting all its cares upon him, and pouring itself forth into the bosom of its Saviour and its God. What if he is clothed with dignity and terror? What if he declares himself at open enmity with the atrocious and hardened delinquent? Shall the cheering light of his countenance be with-held from those who seek its returning beams with heart-felt anxiety and tears? *Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there*, to heal the wounds of the broken in heart, and administer that support and relief, which the timid mind, depressed with the thought of its failings, so greatly needs, but hardly dares implore? Assuredly there is. Does
not

S E R M O N X. 257

not He himself say, *Go up into Gilead, and take balm, and be restored to health and soundness?* Although, in solemn pomp, he lifts up his hand to heaven, and says, *I live for ever*; although he whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold on judgment, to render vengeance to his enemies, and to punish them that hate him; yet does he delight in being styled the God of compassion and love, and as a father pitieth his own children, so is he merciful to them that fear him. Accordingly, the portrait which his prophet Moses has given of him in the former part of his devout rhapsody, is no less amiable than his subsequent one is terrible. He describes his vigilance and tender care over his chosen people in these expressive and pathetic terms; *He found them in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: he led them about, he instructed them, he kept them as the apple of his eye. As an eagle fluttereth over her young, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead them.*

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Thus

Thus is he a God of mercy, as well as a God of vengeance. He never averts his eye from the sinner, who with self-annihilation, and incessant sorrow for his past misdeeds, supplicates for a re-admission to his favour. He will not add blow to blow, nor plunge the torturing dart deeper and deeper into the wounds of the afflicted; he will not trample on the bruised reed, nor crush the heart already broken. He will rather dismiss his spirit from above, to co-operate with the pious endeavours of the lowly, and *beautify the meek* with triumph and *salvation*. The weak trembling hands, that are lifted up with sincerity to implore his assistance and forgiveness, from Him receive new strength; and by him the feeble knees are confirmed which bend in ardent adoration before his foot-stool. His throne is encircled with the gentle beams of lenity and goodness, no less than with the fiercer blaze of greatness, power, and terror. It is with reluctance that he punishes; he had far rather see the guilty
 object

object of his displeasure, renounce his impiety and live. *Turn ye, (says he) turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* And at last, when this rebellious house, by their repeated and obstinate defeats of his gracious intentions towards them, had proved themselves utterly unworthy of his clemency, and his justice called aloud for the inflictions of his wrath, with what concern, what endearing marks of long-suffering benignity, does he say! *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?*

After this survey of the supreme Ruler of the universe, what gratitude, humble joy, and confidence, ought to animate the breast! How amiable an union is here presented us, of omnipotence with compassion and benevolence! To Him, in a most emphatic sense, we may justly say, belong mercies and forgiveness! How peculiarly expressive of this generous propensity to bless are these words which he uttered by the mouth of his Prophet: *Say to them that*

are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with a recompense, he will come and save you. Here is held forth an anchor to the trembling soul, on which it may lean in safety during those tempests and alarms which distrust and fear too often raise, to agitate and depress it till it sinks into the gulf of despondency and woe.

But, before any farther procedure, let it be remembered, in order to repress the flights of human presumption, and prevent an abuse of the Divine clemency, that the same gracious Power who says, *The wicked shall not fall by his wickedness* if he abandons it entirely, and seeks the renewal of his Maker's love with true penitential sorrow, says also, that *the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression*; but if he commit iniquity, he shall surely die. This ought to prevent the good man from claiming any peculiar indulgence or extraordinary privilege from heaven with regard to his conduct. Hence
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he may learn how vain to flatter himself with the thought that, on account of his former probity of heart and purity of manners, he shall be permitted to deviate, with impunity, from the precepts of his God, or be favoured with the smallest degree of exemption from those duties which, by the divine appointment, are requisite to our preparation for divine felicity. The Almighty enjoins his creatures to fulfill the laws which he prescribed for their benefit, in every point and in their utmost extent; that is, with all that ardour and industry of which mortal imperfection is capable.

Let us then use our most zealous efforts for performing, with inviolate fidelity and unremitting attention, what our heavenly Legislator requires of us: and what is this, but to *do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly*, as conscious of being ever in his sight? This (and how concise and easy is it!) is the whole sum of the duty of man. Nothing surely can be more simple, nothing more adapted to human infirmity.

262 S E R M O N X.

This he has pronounced as the surest, and indeed the only means of acquiring his approbation, and insuring the blessings of his protection. To all ostentatious honours, all parade of vain-glorious homage, he has declared himself utterly averse. He demands not our burnt offerings and our victims. He will not be pleased with thousands of rams, nor with ten thousands of rivers of oil. The offering of the heart alone is what he will accept. A broken and a contrite spirit is more pleasing and estimable in his sight, than the costliest and most magnificent sacrifices. Opulence and splendor, bring no more your superb oblations to his altar. Think not to conciliate his regard by those Pharisaic artifices. Desirable and efficacious as your dazzling treasures may appear in your own eyes, yet know, that one effort to relieve distress, one penitential tear, far surpasses them all in value. Such offerings, then, alone, be solicitous to present before him.

Thus

Thus obvious as the method of obtaining his favour is, let us not, by a punctilious observance of matters which have no real connection with our duty, wander from the mark; lest we should render ourselves obnoxious to that reproach of the prophet, which our Saviour applied to the Pharisees and Scribes: *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.* To preclude all cause for this reprehension, let it be our constant care to beg, with the profoundest humility, the concurrence of his all-powerful Spirit with our feeble but sincere attempts; for he communicateth power to the faint who humbly sue for his succour; and to them that have no might he dispenses strength and vigour more and more liberally; till at length they find their whole nature renewed, and, from this sublunary scene of misery and imperfection, ascend as it were with the wings of an eagle into his Beatific Presence.

How pleasing, how full of encouragement blended with reverence, is the contemplation, that so great, so awful a Being as the universal Sovereign of the creation does not disdain the character of our friend and protector ! But how much more encouraging and pleasing is it to contemplate him as our Redeemer ; not only as our Rescuer from endless misery, but also our Restorer to an Eternity of Bliss ! While we view him in this propitious and endearing light, that immense distance at which we stood from his presence becomes annihilated ; we find ourselves admitted to the foot of his throne, and bask in the full blaze of his glories. That inestimable love exhibited in the Redemption of the world affords an effectual asylum to the troubled spirit, and soothes with heavenly certainty and peace all its anxieties, doubts, and distresses. For what other inference are we to deduce from so wonderful an instance of philanthropy but this ? *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall*

S E R M O N X. 265

shall be not with him also freely give us all things? When we reflect on this grand circumstance, the dignity of human nature rises higher every moment in our view; the prospect grows fairer and fairer around us; we behold a ray of heavenly light and consolation darting full upon us, and dissipating the gloomiest shades that envelop this state of mortality; we hear a voice divine whispering peace, salvation, and joy, to the soul. After so transcendent a display of goodness, to how sublime a height ought our gratitude and adoration to soar!

O thou, who, in consequence of having long persevered in the flowery road of perdition, art filled with confusion and dismay, behold here an infallible antidote to that dejection and despair, with which the consciousness of thy flagrant abuse of the Divine Goodness oppresses thy tortured soul. Be not deterred from soliciting the pardon of thy offended God by an apprehension that He, who bows the heavens in his anger, and will vindicate his honour in inflicting

266 S E R M O N X.

flitting eternal vengeance on his enemies, can never forgive atrocious crimes like thine. Calm thy terrified mind with the thought, that thou hast a pitying advocate above, who is able to save effectually those that come to God by Him, since he ever lives to intercede with his great Father for them.

If this reflection can console the repenting delinquent, and invite him to advance with confidence and hope, though with trepidation and awe, towards the foot of the eternal Throne, how sensibly must its influence be felt by the good man ! It sheds a perpetual complacency over all his life, and adds new lustre to his brightest moments. But particularly in that pensive period, when all but internal consolations fail, when the world and all its blandishments retire, and nature struggles with the last awful pang, it enables him to smile, and to cry out with a degree of transport, which a mind less conversant with heaven can never know, Welcome, thrice welcome,

S E R M O N X. 267

come, Death ! oh quickly strike the impending blow, release my panting spirit from its earthly prison, convey it to its congenial climes, and give it to expatiate unconfin'd in its own hereditary heavens ! Where are those terrific frowns, at which the hearts of trembling mortals sink, and retain their fortitude no more ? Where are now thy dreary shades, thy solitary and mournful domains ? Redeeming Love brightens the dejecting scene. Where ghastly forms and forbidding spectres lately frowned, now angels smile, and call me to the mansions of everlasting rest. The dawns of celestial day are opening around me. The Paradise of God shines forth in beauteous and enlivening prospect. I experience a fore-taste of that felicity which the merits of my Saviour have secured to all who love and fear him ; and humbly hope, through those infinite merits, and that transcendent clemency which inflicts vengeance on none but the obdurate offender, to be exalted to the full enjoyment of
this

268 S E R M O N X.

this felicity, and to shine among the Blest
with a splendor not inferior to theirs in the
mansions of glory for ever and for ever !

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XI.

For Christmas-Day.

ST. LUKE ii. 14.

*Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace,
good-will towards men.*

THE descent of the Son of God on earth for the restitution of the human race to the high privilege of endless happiness, is a subject on which it is at all times both delightful and improving to meditate; and therefore it ought at all times to

270 S E R M O N XI.

to be present to the mind ; but particularly at this ever memorable anniversary ; the return of that happy period, in which a radiant harbinger from heaven pronounced these glorious tidings in the ears of the astonished shepherds, *To you is born this day, a Saviour, Christ the Lord !* The contemplation of this great event is wonderfully calculated to elevate the affections from earth to heaven, and to fix them unalienably on the most perfect of beings. If cherished with unremitting care, it cannot fail of purifying the heart, and forming it to piety and goodness.

How mysterious, how amazing a circumstance is the incarnation of the Deity ! Reason in vain attempts to sound the unfathomable abyss ; she confesses her impotence, and adores in submissive silence what so infinitely surpasses her comprehension ! In how engaging a point of view does it place the Godhead ! We behold Him who bows the heavens, before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing, whom

S E R M O N XL. 271

whom all things both in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, obey, who but spoke the word, and they were created—Him whom we had offended, and from whose hands we merited nothing but punishment and rigour—we behold Him assuming the character of our friend, our patron, and deliverer! Stupendous love! To what returns from us is so gracious a Being entitled! Justly may we exclaim with the angelic choir who descended to celebrate the nativity of this divine Philanthropist, this King of kings, *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.* Who that duly considers the importance of this wonderful birth, can refuse to join in this triumphant and celestial song? Yes, ye inhabitants of heaven, ascribe everlasting glory to the Most-High: and ye, who in myriads without number surround his throne in the Heaven of heavens, Cherubim and Seraphim, loudly tune your golden harps to his praise, and, without ceasing, cry, *Halleluiah!* Look down from your empyrean heights

heights a moment, and behold mortals, in emulation of your example, prostrating themselves at his altar, and offering up the tributary incense of their thanksgivings. May our responsive Halleluiahs, ascending on the wings of pious and humble extasy, mingle with your sublimer hymn, and find acceptance at the throne of light! Now shall the tumult and confusion introduced by sin into the world subside, and Peace resume her dominion over the earth; for *unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.* He whose name is *Wonderful, The Prince of peace! The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father*, is come to restore tranquillity, harmony, and love, among his creatures. Benevolence and amity shall succeed to malignity and strife, and earth, which has so long been a scene of discord and misery, exhibit some similitude of heaven in point of repose and felicity.

Cold and obdurate, indeed, is that bosom which does not glow with the warmest and most exalted sentiments of gratitude
at

S E R M O N XI. 273

at the thought of those benefits which the arrival of the great Messiah unalienably secured to us! To how sad and lamentable a condition were we reduced! How infinitely more sad and lamentable must it have been, had not Redeeming Goodness interposed! From that moment the cloud which hung over us was dispersed; light, and life, and bliss dawned upon us; and our feet, which had long wandered in the paths of error, were conducted into the happy road of truth. The divine morning-star arose, and with its salutary beams brought joy to a desponding world; that Star, of which it was predicted, that *the Gentiles should come to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising*. How punctually was this fulfilled! Behold, the eastern Magi come from afar, while the heavenly infant lay at this time in a mean manger at Bethlehem. They come with their costly offerings to adore the incarnate God, and present their gold, their frankincense, and myrrh at his feet. What was their astonishment to see that sovereign, that awful

T Power,

274 S E R M O N XI.

Power, at whose throne angels and arch-
 angels bowed, disguised in mortal form,
 and descended on the earth to live as a man
 among men! Amazing humility! he
 formed the skies, and the whole circle of
 nature was his own; yet, for the sake of
 man he is contented with this lowly bed,
 and disdains not to make his appearance in
 a place where he has no attendants but a
 few lowing oxen — wrapt in swaddling
 cloaths—exposed to all the wants and hard-
 ships of mortality!—Such was the manner
 in which the Hope of Israel, the mighty
 Shiloh—He whom the aged Patriarch fore-
 told so long before upon his dying bed—
 He whom so many prophets announced as
 the restorer of lost mankind, and of whom
 they predicted such surprizing things—
 such was the unobtrusive manner in which
 this celestial Personage made his first en-
 trance into the world himself created!
 Such was the reception which he met with
 from the world he came to save! excluded
 from the inhospitable dwellings of men,
 and obliged to take up his residence with
 the

S E R M O N XI. 275

the beasts of the field ! His own received him not. Acknowledged and adored but by a few, he brought salvation and felicity to all, even to those who turned a callous ear to the invitations of his love, and requited them with enmity, obloquy, and scorn.

How amiable, how admirable is this condescension of the Son of God ! how strongly marked is it with philanthropy and goodness ! Continually revolving it in our minds, let us endeavour to imitate what we admire ; not unprofitably speculating upon it, but turning it to our advantage, and making it the model of our own conduct. Let the children of prosperity and affluence in particular attend to the striking lesson of humility here inculcated on all mankind. How pregnant is it with instruction ! It teaches them, not to make an ostentatious display of those adventitious goods which they owe to no merit of their own, but merely to the benignity of Providence ; and which ought rather to be de-

dicated to that noblest of purposes, the promoting the benefit of their fellow creatures.—Unambitious to be seen by men, and having higher objects in view than human applause, go, apply in secrecy the lenient cordial of charity merely for the sake of doing good. Averse to the example of those who exercise their munificence to acquire an empty name, when you dispense your alms *let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.* Thus shall your heavenly Father, who beholds you in your most secret retirements, Himself reward you openly, even in the presence of the assembled Universe, in the sight of men and angels. Thus shall you emulate the conduct of Him, who, though Lord of the world, preferred an humble manger to the splendid palaces of kings; who, though sent from above on the greatest and most important of embassies—on the most amazing work of love chose at his arrival to be first seen and hailed only by a few simple shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night; and who, in the subsequent part
 of

S E R M O N XI. 277

of his life, after having restored health to the infirm, sight to the blind, and feet to the lame, charged the astonished objects of his compassion that they should divulge it to no man.

Under an appearance of obscurity and meanness what a multiplicity of benefits did he confer upon mankind! But great as his labours were to promote their temporal welfare, they were but little in comparison with what he did to advance their eternal. Not contented with extricating us from an abyss of ruin and woe, he placed heaven itself within our reach, and secured an incorruptible crown for all those who should properly avail themselves of the high advantages which he procured for them.

After so glorious a display of genuine kindness, shall we be remiss and supine in our efforts towards making a due requital? A due requital, indeed, who can hope to make? How can feeble depraved humanity

T 3 discharge

278 S E R M O N XI.

discharge the unbounded debt ! However, we may, by an immovable adherence to his precepts, evince ourselves not totally unworthy of his beneficence. By frequently contemplating that stupendous height of felicity to which he has exalted us, and by suffering the contemplation to rectify our hearts and influence our conduct, we may render our services acceptable to Him who has been so profuse in his clemency towards us ! Think, O man, how happy was it for thee that the Son of God condescended to visit these regions of mortality ! Look back with holy transport on this august Æra. What a revolution, as salutary as it was sudden, did it introduce in human affairs ! a revolution pregnant with such immense benefit to human kind, that the inspired writers, transported as it were beyond themselves with the sublime idea, have exhausted the most beautiful images in nature to give us a conception of it ! They tell us, that *the wilderness and the solitary place should be glad, and the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose ;*
that

S E R M O N XI. 279

that the glory of Lebanon should be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; that streams should break out in the desert; instead of the thorn the fir-tree coming up, and instead of the briar the myrtle flourishing; everlasting joy resting upon the heads of men, and sorrow and sighing flying away.

Such was the language of ancient Prophecy. Such were the sentiments which the holiest of men entertained on the greatest of subjects. No less animated and ardent ought ours to be on the same important occasion. Happiest of all events! From what an abyss of darkness and misery did the moral world then emerge! Adore the goodness of the Eternal Father, who so loved the world, that he surrendered up his only son to purchase immortal salvation for it, at the price of his own inestimable life. Adore the goodness of the co-eternal Son, who, though perfectly immaculate and sinless Himself, yet, to take away the sins of that world, submitted to a painful and ignominious life below, and to

T 4

a death

a death more painful and opprobrious still ! Indicate thy sense of his unlimited goodness by taking with pleasure his easy yoke upon thee, by learning of Him, who was meek and lowly in heart, and who went about doing good. This was his favourite occupation during his continuance on earth ; let it be thine also. The short span of life allotted us here, ought to be devoted to the benevolent employ of alleviating the cares, redressing the wants, and promoting the happiness of others. Improve the flying hours, mark every moment with some useful action. Life may be compared to a large darksome region, where all mankind are fellow-travellers, enabled, and more than this, required, to soften one another's toils, and mitigate the common load of sorrow, by a thousand offices of humanity and love. With an industry equal to the rectitude of thy intentions, seek out the haunts of pining poverty and wretchedness, wipe away the tears of affliction, and cloathe with smiles the face of despair. What can be more
pleasing

S E R M O N XI. 281

pleasing than to behold the hungry whom we have fed, the naked whom we have clothed, and the friendless whom we have patronized, breathing out their prayers for our protection, and imploring the benediction of heaven on our heads? This to the sympathetic bosom affords a delight, to which the luxurious sensualist, amidst all his boasted enjoyments, is an utter stranger. How many are there at this moment bending to the dust under the burden of penury, unable to procure a scanty subsistence for those whom they hold dearer than their own lives, and even for themselves! How many suffering agony and distress in all their various shapes! Multitudes groaning under the scourge of tyranny and oppression! multitudes wandering through a wide world without a protector or a guide, who have seen better days, now reduced to the cruel necessity of supporting a miserable life like Lazarus, with the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table, and, perhaps, contemptuously spurned even by those whom

282 S E R M O N XI.

whom they themselves raised from indigence to prosperity and happiness !

O think on this, ye generous and humane, think on this, and glory in the honourable character of a feeling heart—a heart not unprofitably throbbing with compassion, but prompting the hand to pour into the wounds of affliction that healing balm which genuine Charity never refuses. Glory in obeying the divine injunctions of a Redeemer, who was all pity, gentleness, and clemency, the characteristic of whose precepts was universal benevolence, and whose religion was a system of clemency and love !

But while we are attentive to the discharge of our duty towards each other, it behoves us, in particular, to remember what we owe the greatest and the best of beings. Keeping the good Centurion still in view, our prayers in conjunction with our alms, should come up, like his, in grateful memorial before the Most-High. Our
 hearts

hearts being warmed and sublimated by a devout sense of our obligations to our heavenly benefactor, we shall rise to a far higher pitch than mere morality can carry us. Let us inspect our conduct with an impartial eye, detect every latent folly which wears the mask of virtue, and endeavour with unrelaxing vigour to rectify every impropriety and error, uniting with our attempts our humble petitions to the throne of Grace, for a portion of celestial aid from that Power who can convert our weakness into strength, and has promised that he will never turn his ear away from the supplication of his feeble creature. He will accept of sincerity in the room of perfection, and not be *extreme to mark what is done amiss*. Be comforted then, weeping penitent, whoever thou art, dry up thy tears; approaching towards his footstool with humble hope blended with heart-felt sorrow for thy past misconduct, throw thyself upon the mercy of thy God. Let not thy heart despond; the goodness of thy Maker will never fail. An abdication of
 former

284 S E R M O N XL

former sins, and an ardent desire to regain his favour, are regarded by Him as sufficient titles to his love. Thanks to eternal tenderness and pity! *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous.* Those sacred streams of blood which flowed so copiously from his mangled body on the Cross, are of sufficient efficacy to wash every stain away. He can present us faultless before the presence of his Father with exceeding joy!

Having so solid a foundation on which to build our hopes, let us not delay a moment to make our peace with heaven. Shall we protract to a distant period what, if deferred now, we may never perhaps have another opportunity of doing? Would not this be imprudence and temerity itself? What is the mighty charm which binds our affections down to earth, and prevents us from acting as beings whose life is short and precarious, whose native home is in a superior world, and who are candidates for immortality? Did we but make
a proper

S E R M O N XI. 285

a proper estimate of terrestrial things, and consider with due attention that eternal state which is to succeed the present fleeting scene, how contemptible would appear those trifles of an hour, which engage multitudes in such warm contention! Did men but dedicate to their everlasting concerns half that time which they consume in the pursuit of baubles unworthy of their attention, their lot would be happy indeed. But alas! they see not their danger. Though tottering on the verge of ruin, they cry out, in the language of the voluptuary, *Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered, and let no flower of the spring pass by us*; till in a moment the pleasing illusion vanishes like an airy dream, and death hurries them away before the Divine Tribunal.

The multitudes of the vigorous and healthy falling around us from day to day, tacitly warn us of the instability of human joy. Their fate is a kind of pathetic monitor, which tells us that there is nothing
worthy

286 S E R M O N XI.

worthy of our care below, and that heaven alone is entitled to our desires. Not only those of maturer age are swept off the scene by the hand of death, but numbers in the early bloom of life, in the very morning of their days, are continually cropt away, like the flower which is no sooner blown than it dies. Hence how incumbent upon us to transfer our solicitude from transitory things to those superior objects which can never pass away nor fade! Hence we should labour to secure an inheritance in those regions where alone all is steadfast and permanent, where reigns fullness of joy, and pleasure forevermore. Time is ever on the wing. We are every moment drawing nearer and nearer to that eventful Crisis when all our connexions with this world shall be dissolved, and we be mingled with our native dust. Let us then employ the golden minutes well, arresting them as it were in their flight, and sanctifying them by actions of piety and benevolence. Let us do nothing but what the Recording Angel of the Most-High may with pleasure

S E R M O N XI. 287

sure minute down in that awful Book from which we are to be judged at the last decisive day. Surely, we could not suffer ourselves to be so deeply immersed in terrestrial gratifications did we properly reflect, that when the Period comes (as come it must to all) in which we shall stand trembling on the verge of Eternity, the world and all its allurements retiring fast from our sight, nothing but the retrospect of a well-spent life will be able to administer consolation. Human support shall fail; the boasted objects of our former confidence shall disappear like an airy phantom, nothing but the testimony of a good conscience surviving, nothing but that, and hope in heaven, able to sustain the soul in the last agonies of sinking nature. Behold! the term of our mortal existence closes, and (alarming scene!) an immortal state opens in full prospect before us. Then, how will the splendor of terrestrial glory fade! The crowns and sceptres which have such charms for mankind will be deemed beneath our concern. They will then be
found

288 S E R M O N XL

found unsatisfactory and despicable toys, unable to retard the fatal moment, or to compose the tumults of the departing spirit. The question then will be, What have I done? How have I passed my time below? Have I with fidelity discharged my duty towards God and man? Am I qualified to appear before that solemn Tribunal to which I must so soon be cited?

In this awful moment of perturbation and suspense, happy he, whose conscience all placid and serene, upbraids him not! Happy he, who humbly relying on the merits of his Redeemer, can say, 'Tis done! The season of my probation is past, the blissful moment of retribution is arrived! With pleasure I resign my body to the ground ('tis but uniting earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust), sure as I am of a resurrection to eternal Life, through my Saviour, who shall change my vile body into a resemblance with his own glorious body. But blessed beyond measure am I in being able to say, that into thy hands, O
 Father,

S E R M O N XI. 289

Father, I commend my spirit. I have fought under the banners of my victorious Lord. The toil and danger is over. Nothing now remains but the recompense of my fidelity. Henceforth there is laid up for me an immortal Crown.

Contemplating the enviable situation of the person who is thus prepared to meet the last tremendous enemy of man, can we avoid exclaiming, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* For this end let us maturely consider the extensive, the unbounded advantages which the incarnation of the Son of God, and his descent on earth at this season, procured for us, and let the consideration have its due influence on our life and manners. Let us joyfully embrace every occasion of expressing our gratitude for this admirable and unmerited beneficence, evincing the sincerity of our attachment to our Maker by offices of charity towards his creatures, our alms ascending together with our prayers before his presence; but, above all, let us

U

confirm

290 S E R M O N XI.

confirm and seal our piety by a constant participation of that heavenly banquet which he has prepared for the refreshment of the soul, running with ardor to the celebration of those holy and mysterious rites which he has instituted to perpetuate the remembrance of his love. By these means, when we have finished our pilgrimage through this land of trial and disappointment, we shall be admitted to the regions of immortal bliss, and mingle with the inhabitants of heaven; where we shall be indulged with the immense happiness of hearing, through all eternity, the celestial harpers, the select assembly with the name of the Father written on their foreheads, warble to their harps, in strains of inexpressible melody, that mystic song * which no man can learn; those triumphant choirs, whose supreme felicity consists in lauding and magnifying that glorious name without intermission for ever and ever!

* Revel. xiv. 3,

S E R M O N XII.

REVELATIONS ii. 10.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.

THIS is the address of the Son of God Himself, by the mouth of his Evangelist, to the church of Smyrna, in order to incite them to a devout and unremitting perseverance in that path which by Divine Assistance they had been enabled to tread. It appears by the context that they were to encounter with trials and oppressions: the days of adversity and severe

U 2 affliction

affliction were to spread their dreary gloom around them. Something therefore was necessary, to inspire them with such a degree of confidence and fortitude as might keep them steady in the line of duty, and enable them to bid defiance to the world and all its terrors. And what so effectual in promoting this end, as the exhortation and encouragement of Him, who, having overcome the world himself, was best qualified for instructing others in the means of obtaining so important a victory? He tells them that sufferings, imprisonment, and tribulation, awaited them. But after this information, what is the conclusion? A conclusion, indeed, well calculated to annihilate every fear, and calm every emotion, which the most terrifying prospect of danger could create! *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.* Nor is this animating assurance to be confined to the church of Smyrna only: far more extensive and circumfused is its signification; it being equally applicable to mankind in all ages and in all nations:

tions: and that it was so intended is obvious from several passages in the same chapter; to mention only a preceding verse: *To him that overcometh* (whoever he be, whether Jew or Gentile) *will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.*

Here, with how distinguished a lustre does our Maker's goodness shine! Indeed, the whole tenour of his conduct towards man sufficiently evinces how pleased he is to exercise his darling attribute; but this is an instance, in particular, of consummate love! Though he might have demanded at our hands obedience to his sacred laws as our Creator, as the Creator and Proprietor of the universe, and though all that we can do is utterly unworthy of the least requital, yet he has not left us without a reward; but, on the contrary, has placed so vast a recompense before us, that were we beings of a far superiour nature, we should have abundant cause of gratitude and wonder; the prize which he

has exhibited, to stimulate our endeavours, being nothing less than the Crown of Life itself, the Crown of Immortality and never-ending happiness! Circumstanced as we at present are, surrounded on every side with frailty and depravity, infinite indeed must be the disproportion between our most meritorious actions (if they may be allowed that name) and so immense and glorious a reward! If the royal Psalmist, only in consideration of the exalted rank which man holds in the created system, breaks out into this rapturous exclamation, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* how much greater reason for indulging this enthusiastic strain, when we paint him to the astonished imagination in full possession of that dignified and blissful state which his Redeemer has promised him in a future world! *Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels* (says the inspired writer), *and hast crowned him with glory and honour.* But beheld in this light, he becomes equal to the angels; the inheritance with which he is to be invested being, like theirs, incorruptible,

ruptible, and the space of duration assigned him, like theirs, eternal. Such is the inestimable crown which our Lord has proposed to us! And who would not wish to obtain it? But, in order to this end, we must employ every effort to arrive at that elevated pitch of fidelity which he recommends; we must be faithful even to death. Let us then consider the nature of this great and essential qualification.

It implies an absolute reliance on the divine promises, an immovable adherence to the precepts contained in the Oracles of God, and a total dedication of the heart to his service. The whole ring of Christian virtues contains not a gem more brilliant and estimable than this faithful attachment to Him, whose bounty has communicated all the blessings we enjoy, whose protection still overshadows us with an almighty wing. But it is not enough barely to say that this virtue is not inferiour to any of the rest; so limited a description of its worth would not do it justice: we may ra-

296 S E R M O N XII.

ther say that it comprehends and necessarily implies all the others. It is a copious effluence from the fountain of divine excellence. Of unquestionable importance to our eternal interest, it is, at the same time, the promoter of our temporal. It diffuses an amiable serenity over the mind, a genuine chearfulness, which the trying occurrences of life attempt in vain to ruffle. Its sunshine, cloudless and permanent, beautifies the whole face of nature to our view, and, in particular, gilds the gloomy hour of distress with meridian lustre. Happy is the man who feels its influence ! no accident shall depress, no danger dismay him. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. But with what lamentable consequences is the deviation from those blissful paths attended ! What but this cause has overwhelmed the world we inhabit with a deluge of crimes and misery ? Had our first parents preserved their allegiance to their Maker inviolate, they would not have been dismissed as ignominious exiles from the happy shades of
Paradise

S E R M O N XII. 297

Paradise into a world full of vicissitude and sorrow—a world which formed the most perfect contrast to the delightful mansion which they forfeited! Then too, alas! never had that curse been entailed upon their offspring, the fatal effects of which they now so severely feel! In short, had they been, to the end, inviolably attached to their duty, instead of guilt and depravity, untainted innocence, and its inseparable concomitant, happiness, had been our own; instead of wandering bewildered through this region of care, with only a distant view of our Creator's glory, seeing through a glass darkly, we should have reposed in delightful tranquillity amidst the blissful bowers of Paradise, and been favoured, in all probability, with an immediate survey of his transcendent greatness, seeing him face to face. If such then is our loss, if such are the consequences of disloyalty to Him, who has an unlimited claim to our obedience, we ought to start with horror from it, as from a serpent, which if we but touch, the result will be inevitable misery

• 298 S E R M O N XII.

misery and death. On the contrary, with what vigilance and assiduity ought we to cherish its amiable contrast, Fidelity! Let us then endeavour to acquire it with unremitting care.

It seems obvious at first sight, that this invaluable acquisition is to be made by entertaining that humiliating opinion of ourselves which we deserve, and as adequate a sense of the Divine Beneficence as frail humanity will permit. Let man consider that even the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth Eternity, raised him from the dust, gave him dominion over the works of his hands, and put all things under his feet. He called him from his original nothing, merely to communicate to him an emanation of his own felicity. How disinterested and generous a motive! how conformable to our idea of the Divine Being! Nor could he possibly have any other end in view. The advancement of his own glory or power it could not be. Could the adoration, poor and defective at best, of so
insigni-

S E R M O N XII. 299

insignificant a worm add lustre to his great name—that name at which whole hosts of angels bend in prostrate reverence, and all the powers of darkness tremble! Know, son of arrogance and self-sufficiency, that 'tis impossible for thee, with all thy efforts, to aggrandize thy Creator's honour in the smallest degree.

And if his glory admits of no increase, still less can his power or felicity receive an accession from the feeble being of a day, the shadow of a shade, who brought nothing into this world, and, it is certain, can carry nothing out; from whom if his Creator but withdraw the beams of his countenance, his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish! If angels themselves can bring no advantage to the most mighty and most perfect of beings, how, alas, should man! More reasonably might he attempt to swell the dimensions of the ocean with the slender contents of a rivulet, or to augment the radiance of the sun, amidst his
noon-

300 S E R M O N XII.

noon-day blaze, by the faint assistance of a taper's light. To him who considers the subject with the attention it deserves, it must be evident, that he who introduced man into the universe could not propose to himself any selfish aim in so doing. Could a Being, who but speaks, and the everlasting mountains tremble, who with one almighty fiat reared the lofty vault of heaven, kindled there innumerable stars and suns, and still supplies them with an inexhaustible fund of light; who can, with a single nod, create a thousand worlds more beautiful—more resplendent far than this which we inhabit, who, in possession of unbounded power, fills the whole circle of immensity itself—is it consistent with reason to suppose that this stupendous Being could expect to derive any benefit from a dependant creature, who cannot add one cubit to his stature, nor even make one hair of his head white or black, whose very nature is frailty and indigence itself, and whose whole existence is but a span? No! it could not be. The very thought were blasphemy!



S E R M O N XII. 301

blasphemy ! 'Twas Love alone which induced him to call forth his creature into existence, and 'tis Love alone which still induces him to support that existence, and render it a blessing to its possessor. Thus invested with Being in order to be invested with happiness, shall man perversely deviate from that line of action which his great benefactor has pointed out, especially too when he requires nothing more than a steady perseverance in it, as a return for his disinterested goodness ! Forbid it, Reason ! forbid it, Gratitude !

But is this the greatest in the catalogue of his blessings ? No : immense and wonderful as this is ; yet others are to be found recorded there, below indeed in order, but far superior in point of value and importance. Did he not raise us to a second life ? A deed still more amazing, more replete with love, than his forming us out of nothing ! Glorious as the latter appears, yet what is it when set in competition with his giving up his only Son to the torments

302 S E R M O N XII.

of the cross, to languish out his life in the midst of unutterable agonies, in order to restore fallen man to that bliss which, by his disobedience, he had justly forfeited, and to save him from that emphasis of misery which must inevitably have ensued. Yes! plunged as we lay in the lowest abyss of despair, objects only of eternal vengeance, irrecoverably lost in all appearance, yet divine mercy interposed; the horrors of infernal darkness which were pouring like a deluge around us, fled at the approach of its awful light, like clouds before the morning ray, and we emerged in a moment from everlasting death to everlasting life!

And did he even spare his only-begotten Son! Did he sacrifice the Beloved of his bosom to the welfare and happiness of his unworthy creatures! He did!

** A Truth so strange! twere bold to think
it true,*

If not far bolder still to disbelieve.

** Young's Night-Thoughts.*

Here

S E R M O N XII. 303

Here then what a call for unbounded acknowledgment and adoration ! And can we be deficient in allegiance to so indulgent a Sovereign, whose authority and imperial sway are lost in the depth of his paternal goodness ! Let this striking view of the Deity frequently occupy our minds ; and if, all forcible and interesting as it is, it cannot inspire that habit of fidelity which our Redeemer has so often inculcated, what can we expect to be more effectual ! If some earthly being, actuated solely by the benevolent principle of doing good, should rescue his brother from the jaws of penury and wretchedness, and confer upon him riches, honours, and, in short, every thing which we deem essential to felicity, should we not think him entitled to every return which the most animated gratitude can bestow ? Should we not think it incumbent on the object of his kindness to relinquish every thing that he possesses, even life itself, rather than deviate from his fidelity, and disown an attachment to his benefactor's interest ? And should he, forgetful

304 S E R M O N XII.

ful of the numerous obligations which he lies under, prove faithless, and desert him, from mere wantonness, in how detestable a light would his conduct appear! Surely such a violation of the laws of gratitude would brand his name with indelible disgrace and infamy. What ignomy then, what abhorrence must he deserve, who turns rebel to his Creator, one who has conferred upon him obligations infinitely superiour! Such are the blessings which he has lavished upon us, that though the lip never should cease to breathe the hymn of praise, though the heart never should cease to beat with all the fervor of devout affection, in short, were all our faculties, and the longest term of existence allotted to mankind solely devoted to his service, still we should be incapable of making the smallest return. What punishment then can be accounted too rigorous for him who revolts from so beneficent and affectionate a patron?

But

S E R M O N XII. 305

But inadequate as we are to the discharge of that immense arrear which the riches of the Divine Benignity have heaped upon us, Reason itself informs us that it is our duty to attempt it, and to express our gratitude to the utmost of our power. In addition to this, a far more infallible voice has declared, that the effort, however mean, if sincere, will be acceptable in the eyes of heaven. We are enjoined to tread in the footsteps of the faithful man. In order to stimulate us to this imitation, let us take a view of his condition. How pleasing and amiable a picture does it exhibit!

If happiness be the lot of any human being, surely he possesses it. Whatever incidents he meets with in his journey through life, he still preserves that evenness, that serenity of temper, which so eminently distinguish him above all others. For how can wealth, or power, or honour, elevate a mind that looks beyond the nar-

306 S E R M O N XII.

row limits of time and place to objects infinitely fairer and more delightful than all the pageantry and pomp so fondly admired below? Or how can adversity dispirit him who knows that it is nothing but a prelude to enjoyments which surpass the loftiest flights of human conception, and only sent to quicken his relish of that unbounded and immortal bliss destined for his future inheritance? Should he be required to part with any blessing, he submits without a murmur, well-knowing whose it is, and how little himself deserved it. Does Persecution assail him with its terrors? Is he commanded to violate his attachment to his Lord and Saviour? He never will comply. No; rather than this, he pines in lingering agonies upon the rack, or rushes undaunted into the middle of the flames, his towering imagination all on fire with the behaviour of the glorious train of saints and martyrs, who have nobly dared defy the most horrid torments that cruelty could invent, for the sake of the Lamb that was slain on their account—

S E R M O N XII. 307

Jesus, their Redeemer and their God ! He anticipates with extasy the moment when, all his sufferings past, he shall receive the crown of life, and shine like the stars for ever and ever ! His soul already, with enthusiastic ardor, has winged its flight above sun, and moon, and stars, and expatiates at large in the regions of everlasting day, the heaven of heavens itself. At the height of his agonies, he looks down with pity on his inhuman persecutors, and cries out in the gentle language of his Saviour, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Behold him smiling even in the pangs of death, and exclaiming with an air of unutterable triumph, *O Death ! where is thy sting ? O Grave ! where is thy victory ?*

What then remains for us but to follow his illustrious example ? Let us prove ourselves like him faithful even to death, and then like him shall we obtain the crown of life. Would we win the immortal Prize, we must run the race ap-

308 S E R M O N XII.

pointed us with indefatigable zeal and unrelaxing industry, nor once suffer ourselves to be tempted from our path by the golden baits of Pleasure and Folly. Such is the sovereign will of Him, who never requires more at our hands than we are able to perform. Shall we earnestly contend for a corruptible crown, and supinely linger in the pursuit of an imperishable one? No; let us press onwards with ardour to the heavenly goal, and trample down, with invincible resolution, every obstacle which the powers of darkness may throw across our way. How great and glorious a reward awaits us! not a few fading laurels, not those mean triumphal wreaths which crown the brows of conquerors on earth, but those never-dying palms which encircle the heads of the angelic train, and coronets of ever-radiant light! We shall be united to that happy multitude on high, *which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, which stand before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and more resplendent*

S E R M O N XII. 309

dent than the morning star. Eternity shall open wide her dazzling portals to receive us, and mansions of immortal bliss be assigned us in the Paradise of God!

This recompence in view, what are all the evils and afflictions incident to mortality! How trivial and insignificant do they appear! Set in contrast with this bright and glorious object, they melt away in air, and disappear like an empty phantom, or ghastly vision of the night. What loss ought to depress or disturb the minds of those, whose hope is full of Immortality? Rather let them undergo joyfully the privation of their possessions, explicitly assured as they are, that they have in heaven a far better, a more enduring substance, and everlasting habitations abounding with enjoyments transcending even conception! Thus circumstanced, were our losses and sufferings even greater than those of Job himself, we should, like him, banish every desponding thought far from our bosoms, and exclaim with that holy man, in all

310 S E R M O N XII.

the fervor of pious confidence, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.* Is it the will of heaven that we should resign all that we hold dearest on earth, and do we pertinaciously resist it, or reluctantly comply? Turn to the sacred pages, and behold the faithful Patriarch withholding not his son, his only son, but preparing to make the dreadful sacrifice. Stimulated by his example, surrender up whatever Providence demands, not only with submissive acquiescence, but with becoming fortitude. But alas, frail Humanity, how incompetent art thou for this purpose without constantly imploring the Spirit of holiness and love to vouchsafe his assistance! This course of fervent but humble solicitation, in concurrence with our own endeavours, shall give us hopes of being introduced through the mediation of a Saviour, into those ever blessed abodes which he has given his servants full assurance of inheriting;

S E R M O N XII. 311

riting; there to join in his and thy presence,
O Father! with angels and archangels,
and all the company of heaven, to laud
and magnify thy glorious name. There-
fore to Thee, together with the Son and
Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is for ever
due, &c.

ing; there to join in his holy presence
O Father! with angels and archangels
and all the company of heaven to praise
and magnify thy glorious name. There-
fore to Thee, together with the Son and
Holy Ghost, we ascribe all glory
etc. etc.

S E R M O N XIII.

On Death.

JOB xiv. 2.

He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

THE records of antiquity inform us that Philip, king of Macedon, ordered one of his attendants to accost him every morning with these words, *King, thou art mortal.* This memento was indeed well calculated to answer the purpose for which it

314 S E R M O N XIII.

it was designed. While it prevented him from losing sight of his end, it was an expedient of sufficient efficacy to fortify his heart against the power of those bewitching pleasures to which Royalty is peculiarly exposed, and to soften what was ferocious, and remove what was supercilious in his demeanour towards his fellow mortals, to the meanest of whom he considered himself by these means as superior in nothing but a few casual external distinctions and nominal honours, which were not the reward of any merit of his own. It is much to be wished that such a practice, or something similar to it, were adopted at present; for it is certain that there are those among mankind (and they not a few) who stand in need of such a daily monitor. They live in this world as if they were never to relinquish it, and make it the sole business of their lives to forget that important moment which ought to be continually present to their remembrance, since it may arrive before the dawning of another sun, nay, may surprize them

S E R M O N XIII. 315

them before another moment is expired ; for man *cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down ; he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.* Profoundly immersed in secular concerns, this momentous truth makes no impression on their callous hearts. Yet how futile and empty their pursuits ! While some are intent on the chace of wealth and grandeur, power and ambition delude the view of others with dazzling prospects, and invite them to contend for a prize, which, when obtained, proves unsatisfactory, and unable to confer that happiness which it promised. How absurd then to enlist under their banners ! Here Interest, imperious tyrant of the breast, with arbitrary call summons to his throne, and claims unbounded homage. There Pleasure, captivating Syren, pleads with seducing eloquence, and strews her flowers around. What multitudes, bending at her shrine, profess themselves her zealous votaries, and sacrifice to her dictates every consideration of fortune, fame, and true felicity ! Like irrational animals hurried
on

on by natural impulse, they revel in the luxuries of sense, and, by their abject aims, degrade the dignity of their nature. Folly is lavish of her blandishments and smiles; they rush with open eyes into the snare, and are undone. Ah, what fatal delirium has intoxicated their understandings, and prevented them from considering their danger! How necessary to repeat in the ears of such this salutary memento, You are mortal, remember your latter end, and ye cannot be deficient in your duty.—This advice is no less estimable than compendious; it presents us in a few words with a full and infallible directory of living well, and did we but attend to it, would not only guide us to immortal bliss, but also, in our present state, diffuse over our minds that happy serenity which can fall to the lot of the virtuous only, and is infinitely more desirable than the tumultuous and short-lived pleasures of the profligate and thoughtless.

Is popular applause and the blooming palm of fame the object of thy wishes? When stretched out all feeble and restless on the bed of pain, and the chilling damp, sure presage of thy approaching dissolution, is gathering fast upon thy brow, how transient a bubble, how chimerical an illusion will it be found! Wouldst thou perpetuate thy name, attempt it not by the ostentatious dissipation of thy riches, and by splendid monuments of art; but by compassionately redressing the wants of thy fellow-creatures, and invariably devoting thyself to the service of thy Creator: for remember that another state is to succeed the present, that although thy body may sleep torpid and motionless in the grave, a time will come when the thundering summons of the great Archangel's trump shall re-animate the breathless mass, and rouse it from its dark repository, to experience a duration coëval with Eternity! Let thy life in the mean time be one continued series of exemplary piety and extensive charity.

318 S E R M O N XIII.

city. Thus shalt thou be mentioned by posterity with enthusiastic gratitude and admiration; or if not (as human praise is precarious) *thy witness is in heaven, and thy record on high.*

Constant experience proclaims, what a fleeting vapour, what a dream, the term of our mortal existence is! *The days of our age, says the Psalmist, are threescore years and ten: and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow: so soon passeth it away, and we are gone!* Sooner or later, all must enter those unknown regions whence there is no return. The old and the young, the coward and the brave, the ignorant and the wise, the opulent and the poor, must all yield alike to the inevitable blow, and be hurled to the gloomy mansions of the grave! A few years more, and all the pride of nature, together with the embellishments of art, shall be levelled to the dust in one undistinguished ruin! *In the midst of life we are in death.*—Look back

S E R M O N XIII. 319

back on former ages. What is now become of all that was once so flourishing and fair ! Where are the boasts of ambition and the triumphs of the great ! That Alexander who wept at not having more worlds to conquer, the Cefars, the Pompeys, and all the mighty names which have been transmitted down from age to age with so much parade and glory, where are they now ! What remains of those celebrated heroes who carried victory and terror wherever they came ! whose aspiring hopes could not be confined within the narrow compass of a world ! Alas ! they are now crowded within scantier limits. The grave unites them all ! within these contracted boundaries lie blended together in one common mass the subduer and the subdued ! there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Death has pronounced the irrevocable mandate, Hitherto shall ye go, and no farther ; and here shall the proud tide of your conquests be stayed. He stopped their glory short in its rapid career, and their bold designs and formidable

320 S E R M O N XIII.

formidable schemes vanished into smoke !
They are all fled forever !

Thus too shall conclude all those vain competitions for power, those important interests and contests which now so much engage and distract mankind. The laurels and the trophies of conquerors cannot tempt the gloomy tyrant to delay the fatal blow, nor all the wealth and pageantry of the proud obtain one supernumerary moment. He gives the awful summons, and all human resistance is vain.

At this solemn period the monarch will find but little consolation in the glittering ensigns of royalty, and in the reverence paid him by his attendants. How trifling and insignificant then will appear the regal sceptre, and the dazzling diadem ! He finds by sad experience that these cannot purchase one gasp of breath, or calm the tumults of the dying hour. Then folly drops the mask, and the world appears in its true colours. The adulation of courtiers,

S E R M O N XIII. 321

tiers, and the fawning submission of parasites are rejected with the disdain which they deserve, as utterly unable to procure his agonies a moment's intermission. The officious services of friends and relatives are vain. His senses fail, his spirits droop, and his limbs refuse their wonted office. Darkness involves his swimming eyes. If his former triumphs and martial achievements chance to glide before his fancy, their lustre is tarnished, and their laurels withered: his boasted dignity and renown take their flight like a morning exhalation. Death advances before him with a peremptory and triumphant air, and, like the voice which once sounded from above in the ears of the Chaldean monarch, cries, Thy kingdom is torn from thee. What can he do? Ah! whither can he fly! what can yield him a refuge from the fatal dart! It is not in his power to withstand the blow, he droops his head, he languishes—he dies. Is this the demi-god who exacted little less than adoration from his vassals; at whose imperial nod obsequious thou-

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322 S E R M O N XIII.

fands trembled and bowed down ! What now avails his former greatness ? Where are his glorious prospects and splendid enterprizes ? He and his vaunted projects perish together in the same moment, and are found no more !

Here how peculiarly worthy of our attention is the relation which History gives us concerning the sultan Saladin in his last moments ! It tells us that, being on his death-bed at Damascus, he ordered his winding-sheet to be carried through every street of the city ; a cryer preceding it, and proclaiming aloud, This is all that remains to the mighty Saladin, the conqueror of the East !—How striking a lesson of mortality does this afford ! It sets before us in the strongest light the insufficiency and vanity of worldly grandeur.

Is this melancholy portrait mortifying to those chimerical ideas of self-importance with which your fancy flatters itself, ye sons of pride ? Yes, those bodies on which
ye

S E R M O N XIII. 323

ye bestow ſuch a profuſion of ornaments, and which ye cheriſh with ſuch affiduous care, ſhall lie down ſtript of their ſumptuous covering in the cold damp grave, and be blended with common duſt ! The voracious worm ſhall feed upon them, and no memorial of your priſtine conſequence remain ; your very name ſhall be unknown ! What though the lofty plume nods in ſable majeſty over your hearſe, and your relics are committed to the ground with every poſſible mark of reſpect ; what though ſurviving friends erect the gorgeous ſepulchre to your memory, and the expreſſive marble emulates your appearance ſo exquisitely that it ſeems to breathe ? Theſe are but poor diſtinctions. Can theſe ſweeten the long, long ſleep of death, or preſerve your lifeleſs limbs one moment from decay ? The limbs of the peaſant and the beggar ſhall moulder no faſter than yours ; their ſleep ſhall be as ſound and tranquil in their unornamented turfy bed, as under the glittering arch of the moſt ſuperb Mauſoleum. The ſame ſolemn

324 S E R M O N XIII.

rites shall be administered at their obsequies as at yours, and your native inconsequence be concisely summed up in these humiliating and emphatic words, *earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.*

And thou too, Beauty, consider in what a destiny all thy triumphs must terminate! Frequent the silent mansions of the dead, and attend the lecture of the tomb. What does yonder grave-stone say? How eloquently, how pathetically does it speak! It tells thee that it holds the remains of what was lately vigorous and blooming. Ah! what are *the remains*? An unlovely mass of putrid earth! But hark! the powerful monitor says to thee, or seems to say, “prepare for a similar doom.” And must that form where symmetry and elegance are so conspicuous, be enveloped in an unsightly shroud, and consigned to the ground, to moulder away and perish! Must that velvet cheek which outblushes the morning rose, fade like that rose, and be shriveled up into deformity; and that dewy lip,
which

S E R M O N XIII. 325

which breathes nothing but sweetness, putrefy and become loathsome! Must the radiance of those eyes which sparkle with intelligence and vivacity, which dart life and joy wherever they shine, be extinguished in everlasting night! Ah, mournful spectacle, hideous metamorphosis! That frame so fair, so justly admired, whose every motion is activity and grace, shall be converted into an unconscious impassive lump of clay, and become a prey to corrosive reptiles! O Death, how dost thou insult the vaunted but visionary accomplishments of humanity!

The entrance of the vale of death wears a melancholy and dismal aspect at first sight. But however gloomy it appears, 'tis in thy power, O Religion, to alter and enliven the scene. Whatever shades and darkness hang over it, thou canst effectually dispel them all, and open beyond it ten thousand dazzling prospects far superior to those beauties which exist in the luxuriant imagination of the most visionary and ani-

326 S E R M O N XIII.

mated fabulist ! At thy appearance every horror vanishes in a moment, and the wide unbounded prospect is all serene and enchanting ! The king of terrors drops his invenomed shaft, and with benignant smiles points upwards to the regions of everlasting day. Oh, were the votary of wealth and ambition, those fascinating idols, but once conscious of the more refined, the far superior pleasures which attend on thy dominion over the heart, would he then lavish his incense at their unhallowed shrines ? Ah, no ! Thou would'st be the sole object of his homage. With what rapture would he contemplate thy celestial charms ! with what enthusiastic sincerity confess thy power ! His desires, his thoughts, would all centre in Thee alone, and he be unalterably thine for ever ! Under thy influence, the soul of the good man, when languishing on a dying bed, makes towering excursions through those charming worlds on high, where pleasure triumphs without end, and joys are showered on joys in inexhaustible profusion.

fusion. 'Tis thine with more than human force to support his spirit in the tremendous struggle, and sooth the last agonies of sinking nature. Though the dust is soon to mingle with congenial dust, he is far from being dismayed or dejected; he knows that he shall be introduced into the angelic assembly, and enjoy through all eternity a blissful intercourse with the brightest inhabitants of heaven.

Thus the saints and martyrs of old resigned their breath. They faced the last foe with the most amazing composure and intrepidity. The history of the Fathers abounds with instances of this heroic piety. How admirable is the behaviour of these men in their last moments, how proper for our contemplation! The sacred volumes in particular afford many great examples of this nature. View Jacob stretched upon his dying bed. With what tranquillity of mind, and holy resignation, does the venerable patriarch call his sons together, to pronounce his last mournful benediction!

3-8 S E R M O N XIII.

Behold David at this solemn crisis. With what pious confidence in that almighty clemency which had protected him all the days of his life, does he deliver his dying charge to Solomon ! *Thou Solomon, my son* (says he), *know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind : for he searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*—How worthy is this excellent admonition of being treasured up in every memory, and impressed on every heart !

St. Stephen too presents us with a bright pattern of devout magnanimity and invincible constancy. In the midst of the most bitter sufferings, he defied his inhuman persecutors, and fixing his eye steadfastly on heaven, saw the celestial glories beaming full upon him. *Behold* (says he, with extasy too great to be expressed) *I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God !* Then kneeling
down,

S E R M O N XIII. 329

down, and imploring his beloved Redeemer not to impute the sin of his murder to his diabolical adversaries, nobly emulating the example of his great master in praying for those who deprived him of life, he commended his spirit into the arms of his God, and casting on the execrable crew a look of pity and forgiveness, died—died with such a divine serenity of countenance, such a placid submission and heavenly calmness of heart, that he seemed only sinking into a gentle sleep!

Who can contemplate St. Paul's resignation to the will of heaven, and his reliance on the divine goodness, without the most exalted pleasure, and a desire to attain so eminent a degree of holy composure and magnanimity? He looks forward on death with the most chearful complacency, and cries, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness.*

With

With regard to the genuine piety and celestial heroism exhibited in the conduct of these admirable personages, we may say with the Son of Sirach, that *the memorial of it is immortal, because it is known with God and with men. When it is present, men take example at it; and when it is gone, they desire it: it wears a never-fading crown, and triumphs for ever. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for utter destruction; but they are in peace.*

Next to immortal bliss, it is the greatest felicity that heaven can bestow, to quit this mortal stage in so graceful and triumphant a manner. It reflects the most distinguished lustre on human nature, and crowns it with the highest honours. Who but would wish to make his exit, and bid adieu to the world with so much real dignity? Let us then apply to Revelation for instructions, and commit ourselves solely to its guidance. This great assistant shall
conduct

S E R M O N XIII. 331

conduct us through safe and happy ways to realms of undecaying life and everlasting felicity. This is the medicinal and never-failing fountain whence, in rich profusion, streams of bliss and heavenly comfort flow. Here we meet with a balm for every wound; pain, and grief, and anguish, take their flight: every wish is gratified, and every want supplied. Seen through the clear and infallible medium of the Divine Oracles, temporal pains and pleasures diminish more and more every moment, till they are totally annihilated; an Eternity of bliss absorbs them all. Here we behold Life and Immortality completely brought to light, and offered to the whole world without exception or reserve. These inestimable books were given by heaven in mercy to man, in order to banish the chagrin and anxiety of this mortal state, but in particular to qualify him for a better. They may justly be denominated the universal guide and comforter, as they contain precepts applicable to every age and situation of life, and remedies suited to the most

332 S E R M O N XIII.

most fatal of all maladies, those of the soul, in their whole extent, and from their earliest stage to their utmost height.

To prevent every immoderate attachment to the world, with how peculiar an emphasis do they inform us, that all must die,—that our days are but as grass, and we flourish like a flower of the field, which, as soon as the wind passes over it, is gone, and the place where it grew knows it no more ! Shall this information be afforded us in vain ? Go thou who art in the prime of youth and vigour, go—weep and profit at the tomb of those who have been cropped off by the hand of death in their early bloom,—meditate a few moments on that period when thou shalt be summoned to return to thy native dust. 'Tis at once thy duty and thy benefit to consider it seriously : for want of this what numbers are undone ! Visit the abodes of sickness and decay, and while those affecting images of mortality fill thee with sorrow for the
fate

S E R M O N XIII. 333

fate of others, let them impress thy own end on thy remembrance.

Art thou alarmed at the idea of thy dissolution? Does Death appear terrible? *The sting of death is sin*, says the Apostle. But the sacred Writings discover the means of eradicating this sting, and of converting the last enemy of man into an amiable and engaging friend. They tell thee that thou hast an advocate with the Father, one who is the Propitiation for thy sins, thy powerful intercessor with the most High, and that after having, with dutious reverence, and sincere conformity to his precepts, completed the short term of thy probation on earth, thou shalt be admitted into the heavenly Jerusalem, and among an innumerable company of angels, to enjoy with them the blissful vision of eternal excellence for ever!

Eternal praises then to that all-gracious Power, who, through Jesus Christ, has given us the victory over our formidable
foe,

334 · S E R M O N XIII.

foe, and irradiated with light divine the dismal path which leads to his desolate dominions ! Can this be death ! how changed ! No longer now the frowning inflexible tyrant, he throws aside his pointed dart ; no longer a meagre skeleton, environed with a band of terrors, he wears an angel's form, and with an angel's voice proclaims, that he is come to release us from our earthly prison, and to convey us to the mansions of eternal liberty, the native realms of love and joy ! All the graces of heaven form his retinue, in conjunction with delights which no language can describe, no towering intellect conceive ! Celestial harmony breathes around. Hark ! louder and louder still in exquisite gradation the charming chorus swells on Faith's enraptured ear ! Seraphic harps, in the finest strains of Paradise, invite us to those ever-blooming groves where flourishes the Tree of life through all eternity, and bid us prepare for the amaranthine wreath which cherubs cull from the bowers of light to decorate the heads of those who,
like

S E R M O N XIII. 335

like pious Enoch, walk with God in the midst of their intercourse with men, and whose sovereign object is the favour of heaven !

Blissful effects of Redeeming Love ! But why such a profusion of goodness to man ! Has he deserved it ? What is man that the Most High should remember him, and from the heights of his power and majesty condescend to shower down such stupendous favours upon him ! Ye angels, tune your golden harps to the omnipotent Creator's praise, and magnify his glorious name ! Cherubim and Seraphim, all ye sons of light, ye shining principalities and powers on high, celebrate in your sublimest strains the clemency of the Father, the compassion of the Son, and sing the wonders of redeeming love ! We too here on earth will call forth our best, though imperfect efforts, raise our grateful voices with emulative ardor, and join with you in the celestial song ! But we shall celebrate the divine benignity in loftier hymns—in hymns melodious

336 S E R M O N XIII.

melodious and sublime as yours, when, after having well performed our part below, we are admitted to your radiant choir, and mingle with you in the dazzling climes above, the regions of unclouded light and inconceivable felicity !

With this glorious prospect before us, how mean and contemptible does sublunary excellence appear ! There is nothing here which deserves the name of joy. The glittering phantoms of a moment charm no more ; they fly away like an airy dream, and no trace of them is found. The splendor of mortal glory is eclipsed, all the magnificence of nature is effaced, and the whole world sinks to nothing in our view.

No longer then be afraid of death, but welcome him as the conductor to everlasting joy. Surrounded as we are with vanities and cares, his arrival ought to be no less grateful to us than the approach of Jubilee to the expecting slave. Let us properly fill up the interval, preserving in all

all circumstances a conscience equally immaculate and void of offence, and our exit must be happy. *Beloved*, says St. John, *if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God: and if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* What a powerful antidote to despondency is here afforded us! Have we through inadvertency, surprize, or even wilful depravity, been guilty of errors? Let us with all imaginable diligence set about repairing them, and endeavour to atone for past improprieties by an irreproachable life in future. Let all our actions be regulated by an invariable adherence to our Redeemer's precepts, and by a constant regard to that immutable state, on which, we know not how soon, we must all enter. If such be the progress and continuance of our conduct, our end will certainly be pleasantness and peace. But whatever we intend to do by way of expiating former follies, it is necessary to do immediately, since this night, and long before, our souls may be required of us,

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and

338 S E R M O N XIII.

and *there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave*; the season of probation is over, the scene is shut, and all possibility of repentance excluded for ever. As the tree falls, so must it lie; eternal happiness or misery is our unalterable doom. But let the alarming summons come when they will, if we are conscious of having discharged our duty like faithful servants, and of having assiduously studied to gain the approbation of heaven alone, we may smile on death, and regard it but as the prelude to immortal life and joy. Does it appear to the vicious a gloomy and painful passage to another state, surrounded with terrors and involved in night? To the virtuous it is nothing more than an easy and delightful transition from these dreary seats of care and disappointment to the ever-lightsome regions, where alone what deserves the name of happiness is enjoyed, and the sublimest faculties of the soul are gratified through all eternity. Yes, when the eventful moment arrives in which we are to bid adieu to all below the

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stars,

stars, whatever agonies the body feels, the retrospect of a pious life and the testimony of an approving conscience, in connection with a firm reliance on the merits of a Saviour, shall diffuse a placid sunshine over the soul, which shall gild the darkness of that irremeable country through which we are to pass, and alleviate, or rather annihilate, the terrors of the dying hour. Oh see (cries the expiring faint) beyond the dismal precincts of the tomb what a prospect opens ! gradually expanding to my sight, and becoming more and more beautiful, till all is ravishingly fair, and glorious beyond conception ! Hail promised Land ! Hail heavenly Canaan ! Now is my pilgrimage completed, my cares and labours terminate. I am entering your delicious frontiers, and you shall be my eternal inheritance ! My soul already breathes of heaven, and drinks of that ever-flowing fountain proceeding out of the Throne of God, where it shall soon quaff more copious draughts in perfect liberty for ever !

S E R M O N XIV.

On Judgement.

REVELATION XX. 11, 12.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened.

SOLEMN and stupendous spectacle!
Here language loses all its energy!
the boldest figures and most animated
images which it can select from its ample
Z 3 store,

342 S E R M O N XIV.

store, become languid, lifeless, and insipid. Who though he spoke, not only with the tongues of men, but of angels, though all the charms of human and even celestial eloquence flowed from his lips, could do justice to a subject so awful and amazing ! A scene so far transcending every picture which the most glowing and sublime imagination can form, must necessarily baffle every effort of description. But although it is impossible to convey any idea of it but a very faint and inadequate one after all our labour, let us, nevertheless, attempt it, as it cannot but be highly edifying, and must leave a deep impression on the heart susceptible of good dispositions. The undertaking will abundantly compensate all the pains attending it, by that truly magnificent and astonishing display which it must exhibit to the mind : the best affections will, by these means, be infused, the most elevating sentiments rise spontaneous. Contemplating that irreversibile doom which must be ours at the final consummation of all things, the mists which obscure our intellectual

S E R M O N XIV. 343

intellectual fight shall disappear, reason shall brighten and refine, and the world be seen in its proper light ; we shall make a due estimate of those advantages which too often totally engross our attention instead of being regarded as secondary concerns, and transfer our sollicitude from things beneath to things above.

Does vice allure thee with its blandishments ? Does wealth in sparkling heaps try to captivate thy heart, and dignity dazzle thee with its fascinating glare ? Fail not to represent to thy fancy, in its most alarming colours, that tremendous period, when, as the divine oracles inform thee, the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon withdraw her lustre, when the stars of heaven shall fall, and the heavens themselves depart as a scroll rolled together, the last trumpet's blast filling the universe, and rousing from their tombs the sleeping dead, to appear before the divine Tribunal ! This awful scenery shall render temptation impotent and feeble ; folly shall display its glittering snares in

vain, honour appear, what it is in reality, but an empty name, and all the gems and gold, which sparkle in the mines of both the Indies, be so far from exciting a wish to possess them, that they will be overlooked with contempt.

That this important conjuncture will most assuredly arrive, the voice of Revelation has explicitly informed us. Reason itself gives intimations of it, and though its evidence be not altogether free from obscurity, yet is it by no means to be rejected. But the Sacred Volume throws the veil entirely aside, and leaves no room for distrust or doubt. The favoured Amateurs of the Most-High, those admirable personages whose hallowed pens have transmitted down to posterity the genuine dictates of the Spirit of Truth, are remarkable for a number of collateral and emphatic assertions on this momentous subject. With what rapture and confidence does holy Job exclaim, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the*

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S E R M O N XIV. 345

the latter day upon the earth ! Nor could he have received such full and positive intelligence in this particular but from that divine Illumination which displays in the clearest point of view the darkest, and approximates the remotest, scenes of futurity. St. Paul too expressly declares that the Almighty in his wisdom has appointed a day, in which he shall judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained: which man (as is indisputably apparent from what follows) is Jesus Christ himself. And in another place he declares, that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. But a greater than both has affirmed, that the son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven, arrayed in power and glory, and attended with his angels, to collect the good together from the four winds of the earth, and to separate them totally from the bad ; that the latter shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

Thus

Thus that the day of universal retribution will come, is certain; but the precise time of its arrival is not so clear: nor would it be of importance to us to know it. Such knowledge could only gratify an useless curiosity. Had it been connected with our duty and happiness, we may rest assured that a Being, who is all justice and goodness, would by no means have concealed it from us. But since he has thought proper to veil it in impenetrable darkness, it is not our part to attempt inquisitively to pry into it, but submissively to acquiesce in the wise dispensation of heaven, and make due preparation for it whenever it shall arrive. The most assiduous disquisitions on this head can be of no avail, since our Redeemer himself has positively asserted, that it is unknown not only to man, but even to the angels in heaven. Into this grand mystery the angels themselves ardently desire to look.

It

S E R M O N XIV. 347

It seems, however, from some passages in the Revelations, as if this eventful season was at no great distance. We find these words addressed to St. John, *Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. Behold, I come quickly.*

But whenever it is to take place, how near or remote soever it be, it will come upon us sudden and unexpected. This is evident from our Saviour's words, who tells us that his coming will be like that of a thief in the night, and that as the deluge surprized and instantaneously swept away the old world while they were abandoning themselves to their voluptuous pursuits, and reveling in all the wantonness of thoughtless security, so abruptly and momentarily shall he make his appearance to summon the universe to judgement. Hence he takes occasion to exhort us, in the most emphatic manner, to indefatigable perseverance in the discharge of our duty. Hark ! the seventh angel blows his trump.

Now

348 S E R M O N XIV.

Now tremble, Guilt, at thy approaching doom.

Loud voices are heard in heaven, echoing through all the immensity of space, *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!* Portentous dreadful signs appear in earth and skies, prelude of a more dreadful scene quickly to ensue. Convulsive pangs seize on nature; she quivers to her remotest limits, as if ready to expire. Behold! a mighty angel, such as St. John saw in his mysterious vision, descends swifter than thought from above, a rainbow on his head, his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. How dreadful the rushing of his wings! not louder the rushing of many waters! Setting one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth, he lifts up his hand to heaven, and, with a voice sonorous as the voice of a multitude, swears by Him who liveth for ever and ever, who created
heaven,

S E R M O N XIV. 349

heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that
is therein, that TIME SHALL BE NO MORE !

'Tis begun ! thy final dissolution, O
world ! Tremendous thunders roll, the
mighty pillars of the Creation tremble !
Tremendous lightnings flash around, blaze
crowding upon blaze in rapid succession !
'Tis all astonishment, confusion, and terror !
The beautiful expanse on high, which so
lately formed an azure canopy over our
heads, is now one undistinguished blaze !
Dissolved by the over-powering flame, the
solid mountains run down in streams. The
rivers reverse their course, and hurry back-
wards to their fountain head. Consterna-
tion and affliction ensue, such as were
never known before from the beginning of
the Creation, nor ever shall be more ! Every
mountain and island are moved out of their
places, and the kings of the earth, the
great men and the rich, the slave and the
free, hide themselves in the caverns and in
the rocks, and call on the mountains to
fall

350 S E R M O N XIV.

fall upon them, and afford them a shelter from the lightning of eternal vengeance.

What a scene does the face of the earth display! towers, palaces, citadels, and temples, all sinking in the direful conflagration! Where are now those mighty cities, the seats of luxury, pomp, and magnificence, which but lately lifted their glittering turrets to the clouds, whose stately battlements seemed to threaten heaven? The melody of the harper and musician, the voice of the bridegroom and the bride, is heard in them no more. Where are now the dazzling thrones on which once sat illustrious potentates cloathed in robes of purple and scarlet, and decked with gems and gold? Those abodes of festivity and imperial grandeur are no more, all swallowed up in one general destruction! The massy hills are rooted up from their foundations, and heaven and earth mingled together in one flaming and prodigious ruin!

Now,

Now, Majesty ! boast thy gaudy equipage, be the gilded trappings of the great displayed ; now, Power ! stand forth arrayed in thy costliest badges ; and, Glory ! exhibit thy inviting prize. What trifles do ye appear to the mind, whose view is riveted on that period when all the parade of kings, and the pageantry of courts, shall be as though they had never been ; when the fairest works of nature, and the most sumptuous monuments of art, shall fall a prey to the devouring flame !

Again the trumpet sounds. The universe groans at the terrific blast. Monuments burst in funder, the tomb surrenders up the dust which had slept there from immemorial time. King and peasant, the illustrious and obscure, the virtuous and the bad, all rise together. Christians and infidels, multitudes of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue ; all who have ever existed from Adam down to the present moment, all—all awake !

How

352 S E R M O N XIV.

How every moment the mighty concourse swells ! They pour around like gathering torrents, and overflow the earth, numerous as the drops of dew, or stars of heaven ! millions crowding on millions ! stupendous tumult ! 'Tis all inconceivable alarm and consternation !

But who is that sublime and glorious form descending from the skies, accompanied with ten thousand times ten thousand angels ? Jesus, the Son of God, and Judge of man ! And is it he ? Is this the despised Nazarene, the desolate, persecuted wanderer, who, while on earth, had not where to lay his head ? Is this the man of sorrows, who was barbarously crucified on the top of Calvary, and expired between two atrocious criminals, loaden with ignominy, exhausted with agonies ? Yes, 'tis the same. But what a change ! what stupendous dignity ! what inconceivable magnificence ! Behold those temples, which were once so cruelly torn and mangled with thorns, now crowned with a diadem
of

of light, too dazzling far, too glorious for mortal sense to bear ! Behold that hand, into which his inhuman foes once put the reed in derision, now grasping the sceptre of the universe itself ! He comes ! Lord of lords, and King of kings ! Cherubim and Seraphim kneeling at his feet, and crying, Halleluiah ! Halleluiah ! Yet amidst that blaze of grandeur and majesty which surrounds him, the amiable meekness which characterized the man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief, still appears ; traces of ineffable complacency and benevolence conspicuously mark his divine lineaments.

He separates the innumerable multitudes, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. The good are ranged at his right hand, but the wicked at his left.—All, even the just themselves, appear in trembling expectation at the awful Tribunal ! But how different are their sensations from those of the guilty ! Pious confidence, hope, and joy, arising from a consciousness of their integrity, and the thought of their

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Redeemer's

354 S E R M O N XIV.

Redeemer's atonement, are mingled with their fears. But what imagination can conceive the anguish, the horrors of the latter! They already hear the dreadful sentence thundering in their ears; they anticipate that irreverfible doom which muft soon be pronounced. What would they give for a few of thofe moments which they fo imprudently fquandered, to make their peace with heaven! They wifh—they implore—but all in vain! the opportunity is gone for ever!

Oh! rouse from your fecurity, ye indifferent and fupine, to a proper fenfe of your perilous fituation. Shake off that growing lethargy in whole fatal chains your nobleft faculties are bound. Let the trifles which at prefent fascinate your attention be fuperfeded by fuperior concerns. Reflect on your eternal deftination, and make your peace with heaven. Otherwife, what fupport will ye find, to what afylum will ye fly, at this alarming crisis, when all your ufual fources of confidence and amufement

S E R M O N XIV. 355

shall fail? Lo! the righteous man himself, falling prostrate, and hardly daring to lift his eyes to heaven, exclaims, O my much injured, my offended God! how shall I, how shall sinful dust and ashes lift its head before thee! how bear the lightning of that awful eye, whose stern regard I am conscious I too much deserve! Yet oh! avert thy wrath, and let me rather be an object of thy pity than thy vengeance. Amid this scene of tumult and dismay sustain my trembling frame, and hide me under the shadow of thy wings.

And now, behold! the eternal king of men and angels turns towards the immense assembly at his right hand with smiles that inspire ineffable delight. Dignity, blended with inexpressible mildness and serenity, sits upon his brow. He addresses them with a voice that breathes immortal love, and invites them to the fruition of that hereditary bliss, that celestial kingdom, which had been prepared for them before the foundations of Paradise were laid.

What eloquence can describe the effect of these reviving accents on the minds of the just ! What gratitude, what triumph, what extasy, overflow their hearts, and sparkle in their eyes, which already dart forth the immortal beams of Paradise ! Ten thousand glittering convoys from above attend them ; shouting angels congratulate them on their happy destiny, and waft them on their soaring wings to the empyrean mansions, the radiant climes of everlasting day. Oh ! what enchanting prospects, how ineffably beautiful and glorious, appear, expanding every moment on the astonished sight ! Whatever ancient poets have fabled of Elysian fields is here completely realized ; whatever the Imagination has discovered in its boldest, most sublime excursions, and even more, is here to be found ! Innumerable harps in strains of unutterable harmony welcome their arrival. Scenes of bliss, which transcend all conception, burst upon them, floods of glory, whose stupendous rush angels themselves

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S E R M O N XIV. 357

can scarcely bear! They forget their former troubles; every care is absorbed in an immensity of joy, and the flight of ten thousand thousand ages, instead of diminishing, will but enhance the sum of their felicity, and swell still higher that impetuous torrent of joy with which every faculty of their souls is overwhelmed!

But how direful a contrast is exhibited in the looks of those at the left of their offended judge, when darting the lightning of his eyes full upon them, he pronounces in their ears the decisive, the irrevocable sentence which consigns them over to an immutable state of woe, to the realms of infernal night, the dwellings of unintermitting pain, regions of inexpressible horror, never gilded by one propitious gleam of joy, or peace, or hope, that last sweet solace of the wretched! where, together with the apostate fiends, they must take up their eternal residence, confined in everlasting chains of darkness. They cast one last wishful look on the dazzling territories

358 S E R M O N XIV.

above, and see the heavenly Jerusalem extending her jasper walls far and wide, her sun, the glory of the Deity, shining forth with a degree of effulgence which surpasses all that the most elevated fancy can conceive of glorious ! This scene of brightness more than stupendous, compared with which the splendor of ten thousand suns were darkness, but aggravates their anguish. These are the abodes of infinite delight, but not, alas ! for them. They deeply feel and lament their loss, but ah ! too late ; 'tis irreparable. They depart with inexpressible reluctance and anguish ; but it must be so, their own folly has excluded them for ever !

'Tis done ! the great decisive deed is accomplished ! The righteous and the wicked are now in possession, the one of that happiness, and the other of that misery, which must never know diminution or end. The Deity himself has completely solved those difficulties in his administration which puzzled narrow-thoughted man, has developed
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in the view of men and angels the mysteries of his providence, and rescued his justice from the irrational imputations of sceptical impiety.

And is this the case? Will the time arrive when all obscurity shall be removed from the moral world; when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, and know but in part; when God himself will condescend to throw aside the veil, and justify his actions to man? Shall virtue in due season reap the plenteous harvest of its toil, if it faint not? Who then would complain of that ignorance which is inseparable from human debility at present? Who would be weary in the practice of piety, an eternal recompense in view? Shall we not rather in the mean time be sedulously employed in the performance of those duties which our situation suggests, and religion requires? Shall not every action be connected with that important period when we must stand before the Tribunal of the Most-High, to receive our final doom? Were

360 S E R M O N XIV.

this awful circumstance as frequently before our view as it ought to be, sublunary concerns would vanish away like a morning cloud, the world would lose its consequence, and those splendid toys be spurned with contempt, which folly now grasps with such avidity. Why so immoderately fond of enjoyments which so quickly pass away, which take their flight before we can call them our own, like some sparkling meteor, that, while it charms the eye, melts into air, and disappears for ever? Reflect that the longest term of mortal life is but an indivisible point of time, compared to that Eternity which ensues. Forgetting the things which are behind, and looking onward with all imaginable ardor to those which are before, press with unwearied assiduity towards the heavenly goal, and win the glorious prize. Subdue each habitual depravity, and victoriously trample down every inclination which may retard thy progress in the pursuit of celestial happiness. Despise not whatever tends to me-

liorate

S E R M O N XIV. 361.

liorate the heart, though apparently insignificant and trivial.

The conquerors of mankind are adorned with earthly coronets and fading laurels, and admitted, by way of distinction, into the assemblies of the renowned and illustrious, who, after a few years at most, must be no more. Their names stand emblazoned aloft on the annals of fame, and are transmitted down to posterity with ostentatious pomp perhaps for a few ages. But what an infinitely superior fate awaits the conquerors of themselves, those who keep their own hearts under the most rigid discipline, and strictly guard all its avenues from the smallest intrusion of evil! They shall be crowned in heaven with beaming circlets of immortal glory; their name shall be enrolled among the Just with everlasting honour: our Saviour himself informs them that he will not obliterate it from the Book of Life, but confess it openly before his Father, and before his angels. They shall be united to that radiant,

362 S E R M O N XIV.

diant, that innumerable multitude, which stand before the Throne, and before the Lamb, cloathed in robes of heavenly white, never-fading palms in their hands. All together shall fall before the Throne in prostrate adoration, and with one general voice of indistinguishable harmony ascribe Blessing, and Glory, and Wisdom, and Honour, and Power, to their God for ever and for ever !

O thou, whom destiny seems to have marked out as the child of affliction, whose numerous distresses but too well justify that name, dry up thy tears, and if, impatient of thy apparently rigorous lot, thou hast murmured at the dispensations of heaven, murmur no more. What though thou drinkest deep of the bitter cup of misery ; though harrassed by the oppressions of the bad, like Noah's dove thou findest no resting-place for the sole of thy foot ; repose thy trust on the immutable veracity of thy Creator. Patiently attend that hour of universal retribution which
will

S E R M O N XIV. 363

will assuredly soon arrive; for soon it may justly be called, though millions of ages should intervene, when we consider the infinite disproportion which such a duration bears to the innumerable ages of Eternity. Then all thy light troubles, which are but for the present moment, shall be repaid with a superlatively great and eternal weight of glory. Support thyself under the pressure of calamity with this reflection, and let the world profit by thy example. Show mankind what internal peace Religion can confer, and to what exalted heights of patience and fortitude the reviving prospect of immortal bliss can carry the soul!

And thou, presumptuous caviller at the appointments of Providence, who so frequently darest arraign the wisdom and justice of the Deity, blush at thy temerity. Dost thou petulantly ask why modest merit, hid in shades, languishes out a life of obscurity, its proper rewards usurped by worthless and assuming arrogance; why
Innocence

364 S E R M O N XIV.

Innocence is often exposed to the severest extremes of poverty, contempt, and ignominy, distress her portion, and the wide world her home, her houseless head a prey to the fury of the inclement elements, and her limbs almost destitute of that covering which the imbecillity of nature requires; while Guilt, surrounded with affluence, crowned with honours, and decked in robes of regal splendor, is too generally carested and respected, resides in gorgeous edifices, and regales herself with delicacies brought from the remotest climes, with all the luxuries of the east and west? Trembling in the dust, retract thy blasphemy; for know that, to thy confusion, the great conclusive day shall arrive, in which the regularity and perfection of the divine plan, shall appear conspicuous to every eye, and even to thine, obdurate as thou now art, and blind to rational conviction. Endeavour to propitiate by thy prayers that sovereign Power whom thy precipitate and insolent infidelity has offended, adore the equitable and unblemished

S E R M O N XIV. 365

unblemished methods of his august administration.

In persons of this character the Apostle's prophecy is fulfilled. These are the licentious scoffers who, according to his prediction, were to come in the last days, saying, *Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation.*

But let such remember, that one day is with the Eternal as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. His delay in the execution of his promise does not originate from any remissness or negligence, much less from inability, but from his lenity and long-suffering love towards his creatures, from an unwillingness that any should perish, and a desire that all should be induced to repentance. For as a thief in the dead of night shall the moment of his appearance be, when the heavens shall pass away with a tremendous noise, the elements

366 S E R M O N XIV.

elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth with all which it contains fall a victim to the mighty conflagration !

With what circumspection then, and exemplary vigilance, ought we to conduct ourselves ! Our suspense with regard to this awful time should stimulate our diligence ; the greater our uncertainty, the more industrious should we be in endeavouring to secure an interest in His favour, who alone can comfort and support us in that season of dismay, when even the Best shall be overwhelmed with the remembrance of their frailties, and find that, if they have nothing to depend on but their own merits, and if Divine Justice will be extreme to mark what is done amiss, they cannot be entitled to a place in the beatific mansions above. But *if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear !* Oh ! may this thought sink deep into the heart ! and may we pay proper attention, in this our day, to the things which belong to our peace,
before

S E R M O N XIV. 367

before they are hidden from our eyes for ever ! Should this solemn period take us by surprize, should we be hurried in a moment from the arms of sensual pleasure to the tribunal of an almighty and indignant Judge, that formidable Tribunal from which there is no appeal, how lost, how undone, how miserable our condition ! what would be our confusion, agony, and despair ! alarming and dreadful situation ! Oh, teach us to avoid it, thou all-powerful Spirit, whose mystic energy exalts the soul, and assimilates it to those pure Intelligences which surround the Throne of God ! enable us to employ the momentous interval in offices of piety towards our Maker, and exertions of benevolence towards our fellow-creatures ! Thou who didst illuminate the darksome chaos, and brooding on the face of the waters, impregnate and meliorate them with thy vivifying influence, render our hearts fertile in laudable and holy principles, irradiate our benighted understandings with one beam of thy divine light ; that, seeing in
their

368 S E R M O N XIV.

their proper colours those fallacious joys on earth which still inviting us to pursue them, still elude our eager grasp, we may aspire to those genuine and permanent delights which are only to be found in heaven. Thus, at the Resurrection of the Just, shall our Redeemer applaud us in the sight of men and angels, these delightful words flowing from his lips in accents of celestial harmony, *Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

F I N I S.



